

Out of This World

by Katie Bell

Category: Harry Potter
Genre: Adventure, Romance
Language: English
Characters: Remus L., Sirius B.
Status: In-Progress
Published: 2000-06-07 09:00:00
Updated: 2001-01-29 09:00:00
Packaged: 2016-04-27 19:40:35
Rating: K
Chapters: 5
Words: 29,157
Publisher: www.fanfiction.net
Summary: A crossover between HP and the Chrestomanci Quartet - don't worry, you can read this even if you haven't read those books.
Co-written by Blaise.

1. Chrestomanci

> <meta name="Generator"> This story is written by Katie Bell and Blaise _

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Note: Chrestomanci is pronounced 'Kres-toe-man-see.'

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Chrestomanci and the Twelve Related Worlds belong to Diana Wynne Jones. Jenny and Andrea belong to themselves â€" certainly we have no control over them.

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Sirius Black looked at the pile of essays he was marking and smiled, a bit ironically. Who'd have ever thought he'd be a teacher? Certainly, he'd never once considered it while at Hogwarts as a student â€" and not afterwards, either. Not until the day Dumbledore had offered him the post had it ever crossed his mind to do such a thing.

But he was quite enjoying the job, and in the not quite two months he'd been teaching Defense Against the Dark Arts, he'd had very few dull moments. Dull moments were always to be avoided.

Of course, his students were always comparing him to their former Defense Against the Dark Arts teachers behind his back â€" or so they

thought. The second years seemed happy that he didn't seem to be in danger of dying, as their last professor had done. The third years said loftily that he was 'almost as good as Lupin, but no one could beat Lupin, even if he had been a werewolf' â€" well, most of them said that. The fourth years were delighted that he never offered to autograph things for them, and the fifth years â€"well, he had given some of them quite a fright the day he'd shown up for class wearing a turban. He grinned at that memory and resolved to mention it to Remus next time he came through. Sirius frowned briefly, wondering where Remus was. He'd had a letter last week, saying that he was close on the trail of Pettigrew, but nothing since then.

He turned his attention back to the papers he was marking, and sighed. The fourth years had been assigned a general paper about a notable Dark Magic event of the past century; he'd wanted to see what they thought was worth writing about. Now he was beginning to think he'd made a mistake and should have stuck to Hinkypunks. Almost every paper was about Harry defeating Voldemort â€" or 'You-Know-Who' as they stubbornly insisted on calling him. Colin Creevey was the worst. The kid had a case of hero-worship so severe Sirius was sure that he thought the sun rose and set by Harry's word, and the essay showed it, talking in glowing terms of how Harry had defeated Voldemort. Of course, since no one knew, even now, how he had done it, the paper was a bit short on facts and long on compliments.

It was nearing Halloween now, and Sirius had been thinking about his old friends a lot recently anyway, but Creevey's essay brought back a wave of memories. He let the paper fall from his hands without realizing it as he remembered the endless pranks he and Remus and James had played, how he had always been the one to come up with wild schemes, and James the one to figure out how to make them work without getting themselves expelled in the process. He remembered how happy James and Lily had been when they had married, and how happy he had been as well. He glanced, almost unconsciously, at a framed picture he had of that day. You could see the happiness in their eyes still. His eyes traveled from James to Lily, to the woman by her side, laughing as well, and yet more sorrow filled him.

Jenny. He had loved her, loved her as James had loved Lily, and he had lost her. Such a small thing to die of, a simple illness that he had thought magic would cure easily. He hadn't known that she'd never fully recovered from the fire that killed her parents. He remembered that fire, how he had pulled her from the flames and used his limited knowledge of healing to keep her alive until a Healer could come. But he hadn't known how delicate her health had been. Perhaps she hadn't known. By the time she realized how ill she was, it was too lateâ€|. Perhaps she might have been cured, but the only person he knew who might have had a chance had died a scant three months before, Andrea, Remus' Andrea. Had Remus had it harder, or had he? Remus had not been able to say goodbye to Andrea; he had had to watch Jenny die slowly, unable to help herâ€|

'Are you coming to the match?'

Sirius spun around to see Professor McGonagall in the door. He grinned.

'Wouldn't miss it, Minerva. Shall I save you a seat?'

'No need. I must stand over that Lee Jordan while he does the

commentary.' She sighed. 'That boy is almost as bad as the Weasley twinsâ€¦ the three of them are a match for you and your friends.'

'Surely not! I'll have to give them more advice.' He grinned. She simply gave an over-dramatic sigh and left, heading for the Quidditch field. Sirius stood up and followed her, first putting all the essays into a drawer to finish marking later. Some things were more important than homework.

Out on the pitch, he found that the rest of the school had agreed with him. Lee Jordan was providing the commentary in his zany but slightly biased way, as usual.

'It's a lovely day for a Quidditch match! This first match of the season - Gryffindor versus Hufflepuff - couldn't have fallen on a more perfect day. The ground is still muddy from last night's storm, of course, but I doubt the players will care much about that!'

Sirius sat in the stands, watching raptly. The Quidditch was as good as it had been when he was Beater for the Gryffindor team. Now he had the opportunity to watch the Quidditch all the time, as a professor. He often said to Harry that it had been the only reason he had accepted the job, but they both knew that was only a joke.

Not many people had had as much first-hand experience of the Dark Arts as Sirius, even if certain other members of the staff were still convinced that he had learned them directly from Voldemort. The trial had accomplished much to clear his name, but to some people there was still a doubt. Sirius didn't waste much time thinking about them, but looked back at the Quidditch as Madam Hooch blew the whistle to begin.

'Angelina Johnson speeds the Quaffle up the field, passes to Katie Bell. Ernie McMillan shoots a Bludger at her - Fred Weasley deflects the Bludger - nice shot Fred! Katie's going for the goal - she scores! Ten-nil to Gryffindor.

'Now Hufflepuff's got the Quaffle. Finch-Fletchley's flying well, right toward the Gryffindor posts - George Weasley whacks the other Bludger his way but he dodges. He's speeding toward the goal - he's aiming - he's blocked with a spectacular move by Keeper Alicia Spinnet!

'Alicia, as you all know, played Chaser until last year, when she took over the job of Keeper. She's been replaced by Ginny Weasley. Ginny's the youngest player on the Gryffindor team, an excellent Chaser as well. She - hold on, what's that? She's hit in the head with a Bludger. That looks bad, she seems to be unconscious but is still balanced on her broom.'

Madam Hooch whistled time out as the Weasley twins managed to pull Ginny from her broom and get her to the ground. Madam Pomfrey was examining her when there came a sudden bang and a whoosh of air behind the huddle of people.

Sirius had been in the stands watching the match, but he had hurried down to see what was the matter when Ginny had been hit. Now he, along with most of the crowd, turned to see what had occurred.

A man lay sprawled in the mud. Sirius stared at him. He was dressed very elegantly, in a fine dove-gray suit, a top hat lying on the ground beside him and dark hair almost unruffled by his fall. Mud spattered all of his clothes and his face, giving him a strange patchwork appearance.

Sirius laughed in spite of himself, wondering where on earth the man could have come from. He couldn't have Apparated in, unless there was something badly amiss, and he hadn't appeared to have fallen from a broomstick. As the man did not move, Sirius began to make his way towards him. Not far off, Ginny sat up and rubbed her head. Lee was continuing his commentary, even though the game was not on.

'For those of you who did not see it, a strangely dressed man has just fallen from the sky into the mud.' He sounded like he was trying not to laugh.

Sirius spotted Minerva pushing her way through the crowd that had gathered around the man.

'Everybody, please go back to the stands,' she said sharply. She picked her way through the mud, Sirius following with one hand on his wand, eying the man. He raised his head, somehow managing to do even that with a dignity that suited his dress.

'Good afternoon,' he said faintly. Sirius noticed that he was extremely pale. 'Could you tell me where I am?'

'Are you hurt?' asked Minerva, stooping down. He probably wasn't dangerous, Sirius thought, but it would be better to keep nearby.

'I â€" don't think so,' he said. He seemed to look inwards for a moment. 'I think I'll be all right.' He sat up with something of a struggle. Sirius stepped forwards and helped him up. Mud caked his back, but he held himself as if he was unaware of it. Standing, he towered several inches above Sirius. There was a vague and distant look in his eyes; Sirius wondered briefly if he was concussed.

'Who are you?' asked Sirius bluntly.

'I am Chrestomanci.' The man brushed a bit of mud from himself and shook hands formally with Sirius, who grinned.

'Sirius Black. Pleased to meet you â€" er â€" Mr. Chrestomanci.'

'Just Chrestomanci will be fine,' the man said, looking at Sirius as if seeing him for the first time. 'Could you do me the kindness of telling me where I am?'

'Hogwarts,' said Minerva sternly. 'Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Now, if you'll step this way we'll continue the match, and you can explain exactly how you came here.'

The man nodded absently. He seemed slightly shaky on his feet as he walked off the pitch, which was, Sirius thought, not unexpected seeing as he had just fallen out of the sky. As the players remounted their broomsticks, Chrestomanci stared up at them in amazement.

Sirius noticed Madam Pomfrey approaching, and hastily ducked back out of her way. He looked back at the scene that had been the center of attention just moments ago. Ginny was re-mounting her broom and seemed fine. The Bludger had probably just stunned her momentarily.

Madam Pomfrey was talking to Chrestomanci quietly, one hand on his arm. He seemed to be having as much difficulty in fending her off as everyone else in the school did. Sirius looked up as the crowd rippled to let another person through.

Professor Dumbledore had appeared. 'Good afternoon,' he said with a genial smile. 'Good to see you.' He extended a hand to Chrestomanci, who shook it. 'I think you'd better come inside " if you don't mind, Poppy,' he added, turning to the matron. She gave a reluctant nod.

'Send him up to me when you've had your chat, though, please.' She looked at the stranger with narrowed eyes. 'He's had rough time lately.'

Chrestomanci gave a wry smile, and Sirius grinned.

'Sirius, Minerva, do come with us. I suspect what we have to discuss will involve you both.' Dumbledore nodded to them. 'And then you can explain to me exactly who you are and how you come to be here.'

As they walked slowly up to the school, Sirius heard Lee Jordan's commentary begin again. It looked like he wasn't going to get the opportunity to watch Harry play today.

Chrestomanci walked wearily, as if he had just run a marathon or was carrying a heavy burden, and the others slowed their steps to match his. None of them spoke as Dumbledore led them up to his parlor for receiving guests. He ushered Chrestomanci, mud and all, to a sofa, and Sirius took a seat at one side.

'Now then,' said Dumbledore. 'I believe you have come from another world?'

Sirius caught his breath and stared from Chrestomanci to Dumbledore. 'Another world?' he asked without comprehension. Minerva turned to him.

'There are many worlds,' she said, and he was reminded of the tone she used in lessons, 'very many other worlds. Very few people are aware of them, though some Muggle scientists have suggested the existence of what they call parallel universes. But the Muggles do not realize that the only way to move between the worlds is to use magic.'

'That is correct,' said Chrestomanci, 'though I am not entirely certain what you mean by Muggles.'

'Non-magical people,' said Minerva quickly.

Chrestomanci nodded. 'Well,' he said, 'it is quite correct that I have come here by magic. But I would appreciate knowing where I am, if you don't mind.' He looked at Dumbledore without a great deal of

hope.

'From what I've read, I don't think you use exactly the same system of numbering the worlds as we do,' Dumbledore replied. 'Of course, you're still in Series Twelve â€"'

Sirius became even more confused. Other worlds and numbers and all manner of things that he'd never heard of. He wondered how many things he didn't know about the other worlds.

'Good,' said Chrestomanci. 'I was fairly sure I was, because of the language. I suspect that this world is very similar to my own in many ways.' He looked at Dumbledore as if he rather wished this were not the case, and Sirius bristled.

'How did you get here, then, if you come from another world?' he asked.

'Well,' said Chrestomanci, 'I am not entirely certain of the details. I was in a place of high magical intensity, and a very powerful enchanter somehow managed to work a spell that sent me flying through the barriers of the worlds.' He sighed. 'I have reason to suspect that the enchanter was not a native of my own world.'

A slight smile crossed Dumbledore's face. 'I think I may be familiar with the person you mean,' he said. 'Do you have any clues as to who he is?'

'Only a name, but I don't know if it's the name of a person or an organization or something altogether different. What does 'Voldemort' mean to you?'

Dumbledore nodded calmly. Minerva caught her breath and looked at Chrestomanci with disbelief. Sirius grinned with excitement. Now something would happen.

'I had wondered if he might not have been taking refuge in another world,' said Dumbledore. He looked at Chrestomanci's vague expression. 'Let me explain. Voldemort is a Dark wizard who has been attempting to take control of the running of our world for â€" how long would it be now? More than thirty years, I think. It does not surprise me in the slightest that he has been traveling between the worlds. I hope he has not caused you too much trouble?' His tone of voice suggested that he had let a stray dog into Chrestomanci's study and was hoping he had not chewed the furniture.

A shadow crossed Chrestomanci's aristocratic face. 'I fear he may have done a great deal of harm. Let me be candid with you. My most promising student â€" a nine-lived enchanter like myself â€" has been murdered by him, and the base of the strength I have has been destroyed.' He looked very tired again, and Sirius noticed him lean back against the sofa.

'That's terrible,' said Minerva softly. 'We have lost a great deal to You-Know-Who over the years. I was not aware that he was continuing his rampage into other worlds.'

Dumbledore said nothing, but Sirius could see that he was worried.

'I don't know why I ended up here,' continued Chrestomanci. 'It is possible that there is a compelling reason. But I now need to find another nine-lived enchanter to replace Cat â€" he was my student - or else my world will be in grave danger.' His vague look grew vaguer, and his voice trailed off.

Sirius stared at him, concerned and curious. 'Nine-lived enchanter?' he echoed. 'What's that?'

Minerva also looked puzzled. She was watching Chrestomanci with sharp eyes. 'I think you'd better go on up to the Infirmary,' she said. 'If you've been fighting You-Know-Whoâ€|'

She had not spoken too soon, for Chrestomanci did indeed look as if he would faint. He nodded weakly. Dumbledore smiled, and murmured something to the gargoyles on the door.

The door opened a few moments later and Madam Pomfrey arrived. She took a single look at Chrestomanci as he sat wearily in the sofa.

'Come on, straight up to the Infirmary with you,' she said, extending a sturdy arm to help him to his feet. Chrestomanci submitted to her fussing and allowed himself to be escorted away. When he was gone, Sirius and Minerva looked at each other.

'So what is a nine-lived enchanter?' asked Sirius.

Minerva shook her head. 'I don't know. I've never heard of them. Albus?'

Dumbledore jerked back from whatever train of thought he had been lost in. 'Nine-lived enchanters? Ah, now that's a tricky one. You understand that there are twelve Related Worlds, of which we are part of number twelve?'

Sirius nodded, not entirely confidently.

'Right, then each of the twelve worlds is split into a series. There are nine worlds in this series, and every person has a counterpart in each of the nine worlds. Is that clear?'

'Well,' said Sirius, 'I've never heard anything about this before.'

'No, it's not common knowledge, partly because there have been many tragic accidents when people tried to move between worlds.' He sighed. 'Anyway, you have a series of 'doubles,' in all of these nine worlds, and so do all other people. There are a very few, rare set of people who do not have doubles. All nine of the doubles are combined into one person, and so they have nine lives. These people are invariably highly gifted wizards and witches.'

'They have nine lives?' Sirius stared at him. 'That's impossible. You mean you can kill them and they don't die?'

'Precisely. They don't live forever, of course, they die eventually, but with the combination of powerful magic and the nine lives they have a much longer lifespan than most people.'

'And Chrestomanci said You-Know-Who killed one of these nine-lived enchanters?' Minerva looked horrified at the very thought.

'Yes.' Dumbledore frowned a little. 'I fear he is growing in strength again. And unless we can help my colleague Chrestomanci, he may gain a foothold in another world as well.'

Silence followed this comment, which was only broken when Madam Pomfrey came bustling into the room.

'Your guest's collapsed,' she said, nodding to Dumbledore. 'Absolute rest is what he needs, for a few days. Goodness knows what he's been doing.'

'Fighting Voldemort,' said Dumbledore soberly. 'And it looks like we're going to be doing a lot more of that over the next few days.'

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The boat rocked slowly back and forth on the quiet waters of the English Channel. Remus Lupin considered himself fortunate as he sat on his bunk and noticed some of the other passengers looking very green and seasick. They would put in at Portsmouth in the morning.

He was almost in the last leg of his journey back home. This was the third day he had been traveling up through Europe from Albania, and he was tired. Nothing had turned out as he had hoped, and he felt that two months had been utterly wasted.

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Well, what better thing would I be doing? he asked himself. He knew the answer to that. But it had been frustrating all the same, for just as he had been in high hopes of success, his quarry had vanished. Remus had strong suspicions of where he had gone to, but they didn't really help, for Peter Pettigrew had gone where nobody could pursue him.

Remus had hunted Peter through Albania, had tracked him down to his hiding place in a church, and would have caught him had he not disappeared. Thinking he had simply Disapparated, Remus had tried to follow, but he soon realized that Peter had performed a more complicated spell than that. From what he could tell, Peter had escaped him by crossing the boundaries into another world.

How he had done it was anybody's guess, and Remus had not believed it was true for a long time. But after he had vanished, Remus had carefully tried to trace him with various charms, and had finally established that Peter Pettigrew had leapt into another world.

The possibilities of this alarmed Remus greatly. For what Pettigrew could do, he was certain Voldemort could do as well. The very thought of Voldemort loose in another world scared him. And so he was rushing back to Hogwarts as swiftly as he could to bring the news.

Well, Remus thought, it won't do any good if I stay awake all night. He lay down on the narrow, uncomfortable bunk. It was a nicer place than many he had slept in over the past months, and he was very

tired. It was not long before he was asleep, lulled by the gentle rocking of the ferry.

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He was in a room in a house he did not recognize, but that was strangely familiar to him nonetheless. Voices spoke behind him, and he spun around. Three women were sitting together, two side-by-side on a sofa and the third in an armchair near them. Remus gasped.

'Andrea!' he cried. None of them moved from their seats. He stared, and started across the room towards her. Again he called her name, and again she ignored him utterly. He went over to her and reached out to her, but his hand went through her arm and she neither saw nor felt him. Wildly, Remus turned to the other two women. It was a moment before he recognized one, but the other he knew instantly from her green eyes. He shouted at them, and still they did not hear.

Frustration and anger were welling up inside Remus, and he stood between the women and shouted for all he was worth, but none of them so much as blinked. He turned back to Andrea.

'Oh, my love, why can't you see me?' he said, reaching out to her, but again his hands went through her body. Three times he tried to catch her in his arms, and three times he failed. He sank down to the floor beside them and wept tears that the women did not hear.

'I don't know,' replied the woman on the armchair to a question he hadn't heard. He could tell it was Lily from her voice alone. 'But James won't be here tonight. He's opening the Halloween Festival up in London.'

'Good for him,' said the third woman, Jenny Anderson. 'Perhaps we all should have gone, instead of sitting around here like so many wet hens.'

The other two smiled.

'Perhaps we should,' said Andrea. 'But â€" well, parties and feasts on Halloweenâ€" She trailed off. Remus knew at once what she was describing, but then he looked up at her in confusion. Andrea had been dead when that had happened, she had been spared the grief of knowing what had become of her friends. That was strange.

'Yes, I know,' said Jenny, reaching out and putting her arm around Andrea.

'Fourteen years ago,' said Andrea softly, 'and it still feels like it was yesterday.' She put one hand over the other and twisted a ring she wore on her finger. Remus did not have to look closely to see the opal that glittered in the center, and he caught his breath in a mixture of joy and sadness. Andrea still wore his ring.

He gazed at the women as they talked softly about things he didn't really understand. They all were older than he remembered, far older. Lily was no longer as slender as she had been as a young woman, she looked plump and comfortable, and still very pretty. Jenny had changed greatly, he had been hard put to recognize her at first, but

now he could see the same woman Sirius had loved. And his own Andrea â€" in his eyes she was as beautiful as the day he had first seen her, but she too looked older. All of their faces were lined, both with laughter lines and furrows of care and sadness.

The floor began to shake. Remus caught hold of something, and it was a blanket. He lurched backwards and forwards wildly, and the scene began to dissolve.

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The ship gave another lurch, and Remus was wide awake as it rolled back and forth on the seas. He was still shaking. Never before had he had such a vivid dream. His bunk swayed beneath him, and he pulled the blankets around him, trying to put the thoughts of those three women from his head. _What does it mean?_ he asked himself over and over again, and he did not fall asleep again that night.

When they put in at Portsmouth, he put the dream from his mind and set about finding a train that would take him to London.

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Fred and George hurried down the corridor, shaking with suppressed laughter. They turned a corner and crouched, waiting for their scheme to mature.

There came a great explosion and a flood of water from under a nearby door. The boys heard a wailing noise.

"Oh, if it weren't enough to have people mocking me and throwing books through my head, now they have to blow up my bathroom!"

The twins looked at each other. "Success!"

George snorted with laughter. "Myrtle is such fun to play with, isn't she?"

"Yes. Now let's get out of here before Filch shows up." Fred led the way.

They were halfway down the stairs when they heard the noise of running feet behind them. Then there was a scream, followed by a horrible thump. The twins stared at each other, white-faced, before turning and running back up the stairs.

Ginny lay in the corridor, head against the wall. They saw the blood on the wall and the great wound on her head. She had apparently slipped in the water that covered the floor.

"Oh no," Fred gasped, rushing to her side.

"She hasn't got a pulse!" George said frantically. Fred leapt to his feet and began to run down the hall, yelling for Madame Pomfrey loudly.

A crowd of people appeared as if from nowhere, clustering around Ginny. Madame Pomfrey was among them, pulling out her wand as she knelt by Ginny's side. Pomfrey's hands were steady, but her voice shook.

"What happened?" she demanded, not looking up from Ginny.

"She- she fell," Fred said miserably. "Is she alive?"

Madame Pomfrey did not answer for a long moment, instead checking for a pulse and examining Ginny's wound.

"I'm taking her to the hospital wing, now," Pomfrey said finally.
"She's not dead yet."

Her words did not comfort the twins at all, and they hurried after her as she went, miserable and terrified that their sister was dead.

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Chrestomanci sat on the end of the bed in the Infirmary. Persuading Madam Pomfrey that he was well enough to leave was proving harder than he had thought. She was impossible to wheedle, coax or argue into doing something she didn't want to do. And Chrestomanci also had to fight the nagging idea that she was probably right. The enchanter who had murdered Cat, his apprentice, had also half-destroyed the garden that was the roots of his power. He was tired.

He knew there was a nine-lived enchanter somewhere in the school. The whole building glowed with it. Sometimes he felt jolts as the person exercised his power. Dumbledore had come and talked with him, and they had considered many possibilities, including a boy called Harry Potter, whom everyone seemed to think very highly of. But Dumbledore had brought the boy to see him, and Chrestomanci could tell at once that he was no enchanter. A powerful wizard, no doubt about that, and with some very unusual skills, but he had only one life. But he had to find the enchanter. He had been here three days, and all the while he had been keenly aware that his own world was suffering from his absence.

Suddenly he sat bolt upright. This was it. Whoever the nine-lived enchanter was, he had just lost a life. Suddenly he was glad he was in the Infirmary. If someone had lost a life, chances were he would end up here.

There were shouts outside, someone shouting for Madam Pomfrey. He waited, alert. This was it. Now, the enchanter would arrive.

It seemed to take a very long time between when Madam Pomfrey had rushed out and when she came back prodding a stretcher forwards with her wand. He peered forwards to see, getting up from the bed.

There was a rather small shape lying on the stretcher. He stared. It was a girl, with flaming red hair and even redder blood oozing from a gash in her scalp. But there could be no doubt about who she was. An enchantress, then, not an enchanter. As he watched intently, Madam Pomfrey muttered spells under her breath and put her hands on the wound. There were two more boys, both with equally red hair, standing on either side of her with extremely anxious looks on their faces. For a split second, Chrestomanci wondered if he were seeing double, for the boys were identical. Then one bent down, and he realized they were twins.

'Out, both of you,' said Madam Pomfrey without looking up.

'Will she be all right?' demanded one, without budging.

'I don't know. Don't interrupt me.' Her tone was sharper than Chrestomanci had ever heard it before, and she looked very concerned.

'She'll be all right,' said Chrestomanci, getting up and crossing the room.

Madam Pomfrey did not look up. Chrestomanci absently identified the spell she was using as a fairly advanced Resuscitation Charm, recalling long lessons on how to identify different types of magic.

'You don't have to do that,' he said. 'She really will be fine.'

'For Asclepius' sake, shut up!' she snapped. 'She's not breathing.'

Chrestomanci decided there was no use in protesting. Madam Pomfrey stared at Ginny helplessly for a moment, then sank back on her heels.

'It's no good,' she said in a voice so quiet that Chrestomanci barely heard. 'She's dead.'

Chrestomanci debated whether to tell her it would be all right or not. He was utterly certain of what he had felt, and he knew the girl was a nine-lived enchanter — enchantress, he corrected himself mentally — and that she hadn't used up all her lives. So she would be fine. The matron was looking very upset, and he wondered what to do.

'Let me look at her,' he said, approaching.

'There's nothing that can be done,' said Madam Pomfrey in a sternly controlled voice, standing up. Chrestomanci looked at the girl carefully. He could feel the next life about to take over, it was almost making his neat hair stand on end. Then he saw her chest rise and fall once, and twice.

'She's alive,' he said gently.

Madam Pomfrey stiffened. 'Don't be silly,' she said in a razor-edged voice. 'She's dead.'

At that point, the girl coughed. Madam Pomfrey spun around, eyes wide. She stared at her patient with incredulity, then dropped down by the stretcher.

'Ginny,' she gasped as the girl's eyes flickered open, then shut again. A slight smile made its way across Chrestomanci's face.

'Just let her lie still for a bit,' he said. 'She'll be a little disorientated at first, but she'll be fine in a few minutes.' He sat down on the edge of a bed nearby and watched. Madam Pomfrey did not take his advice, but began to work various unnecessary spells. Well,

it wouldn't hurt her, Chrestomanci thought, perhaps the matron could use the practice.

As he had predicted, the girl â€" Ginny, Chrestomanci thought the matron had called her â€" blinked again and looked around her confusedly. Madam Pomfrey spoke quietly to her, and Chrestomanci was impressed with the professional control of her voice. He didn't listen to what was being said, but he watched as the matron levitated the girl into a bed and drew the curtains around it.

A few minutes later she emerged, still looking shaken.

'I'd have sworn she was dead,' she said slowly, almost as if talking to herself. 'I've never seen anything like it before. I think I'd better ask Dumbledore to come and have a look at her.'

Chrestomanci didn't answer, and sat watching on the edge of his bed. Madam Pomfrey went to the door and hurried off, with a parting injunction to him not to go anywhere.

He went to have a look behind the curtain. The red-haired girl was rubbing her head as though she had a headache, and she still looked a trifle disorientated.

'Aren't you the man who fell into the Quidditch match?' she asked when he stuck his head through the gap in the curtains.

'Yes, that's right,' he said, allowing his eyes to lose their focus as he tried to gauge the extent of her abilities. He wondered what her weak point was. It was bound to be something. 'How do you feel?' he asked after a moment.

'All right. Got a headache. Madam Pomfrey won't tell me what happened, though. She just says I have to rest. Do you know?' The girl looked at him piercingly with her blue eyes. 'You're a strong wizard, aren't you?'

Chrestomanci chuckled a little at that. 'So are you,' he said. 'I'm not sure what happened to you, but you did hurt your head.'

'It was the twins,' she said, scowling. 'They always do things like that. But I mean, what happened to get Madam Pomfrey all worked up, and why's she gone to get Dumbledore?'

Chrestomanci hesitated. 'It's a bit complicated, and â€" well, you've got to know at some point. How much do you know about World Theory?'

'What?' She looked puzzled, and Chrestomanci sighed. It was going to take a while.

Ten minutes later, he had explained the rudiments of the way the Related Worlds worked, and she was looking tired and confused.

'Why are you telling me all this?' she asked. 'I mean, what's it got to do with anything?'

Chrestomanci, who had gone to sit on the end of her bed to explain better, sighed. Then he heard the door open, and the voices of the matron and the Headmaster.

'No,' the matron was protesting. 'I am quite certain.' She drew back the curtains to admit Professor Dumbledore. 'What are you doing here?' she demanded, looking outraged. 'Ginny is ill and so are you.'

'We're both fine,' said Chrestomanci, looking at Dumbledore. The ancient wizard looked amused, and Chrestomanci could see at once that he understood what was happening.

'I think Chrestomanci should remain,' he said with a smile. 'He has something to tell us, I see.'

'I was in the process of explaining what happened to â€" to Ginny.' He thought of Cat with some sadness. This girl seemed to be considerably more daring than Cat had been. She'd liven things up at Chrestomanci Castle, he thought. 'As I was saying,' he continued, turning back to Ginny, 'all of this is relevant. You and I are alike in that we do not have a string of doubles throughout the series.'

'Why not?' she asked as he paused.

'All of our lives are collected together. So all nine people are â€" well, the best way to imagine it is that they're collected together inside you. It's the same for me. That's what makes you such a talented witch, and it's what allowed you to survive this accident. You have nine lives, Ginny, or you did.' He looked at her searchingly. 'I make it six now. What other accidents have you had?'

Ginny looked thunderstruck, as did Madam Pomfrey. Dumbledore was smiling.

'You're pulling my leg,' said Ginny after a moment. She looked appealingly at the Headmaster, but he was nodding.

'Have you had any other dangerous accidents during your life?' he asked.

'Well â€" there was the other day, with the Bludger â€" that was really odd,' she said slowly. 'I thought I was dying for a minute.'

Chrestomanci felt as though someone had just switched the lights on. 'Of course,' he murmured under his breath. 'Of course.' That would explain why he had been pulled here. If this enchantress had lost a life just as Voldemort was attacking him, it would have diverted him here by the force of it. 'That was when I arrived?' he asked, though he already knew the answer.

Dumbledore too was nodding. 'That's correct. I take it that explains your presence here?'

'Yes.' The wizard might be ancient, thought Chrestomanci, but he was certainly alert. 'What about the first life?' he asked.

'I don't know. I can't think of anything.' She frowned. 'Oh, of course. The â€" the diary.' She looked at Dumbledore, who was nodding. 'I don't want to talk about it,' she murmured.

'Please,' said Chrestomanci, 'it is extremely important.' He looked up at Dumbledore.

'Ginny suffered an attack by Voldemort three years ago,' he said. 'He was drawing on her lives to increase his own strength.'

'Ah,' said Chrestomanci. 'I am familiar with the situation. What did Voldemort use?'

'A diary,' said Ginny in a small voice.

'I see. Now,' Chrestomanci turned towards Dumbledore, 'I'm going to have to ask you to allow Ginny to come back with me as my student.'

Dumbledore did not move for a moment. 'Well, of course I quite understand why it's necessary, but the people you really have to speak with are Miss Weasley's parents.'

'That'll be fine. It is extremely urgent that Ginny and I return to my world as soon as possible, and we will continue to work at the problem of Voldemort.' Ginny and Madam Pomfrey both flinched. 'Without her help, I really don't know how we're going to get him back here in your world.'

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"Absolutely not!" Mrs. Weasley glared at Professor Dumbledore. She and her husband and Ginny were in his office, along with Chrestomanci. Dumbledore and Chrestomanci were both seated, but Mrs. Weasley paced up and down.

"But she must," Chrestomanci insisted. "It's vital to the security of the universes."

"She's my daughter, and she's fourteen. She's not going off gallivanting off to strange worlds. Why don't you find some other girl and leave Ginny alone?" Her glare did not let up.

Chrestomanci sighed. "My dear Mrs. Weasley, I wish I could. Unfortunately, nine-lived wizards are extremely rare. In my own world, there were only two – myself and another, who is now dead. I cannot leave your world without her help." He tried to smile in a soothing manner, but Mrs. Weasley still looked like a tiger.

"Molly," Arthur Weasley ventured, "perhaps we should consider – after all, this is quite an opportunity for Ginny – and my, if they need her help that badly, we should let her go."

"Indeed," Dumbledore said. "She could become an incredibly powerful woman, Mrs. Weasley. And she will have a vital job. As my esteemed colleague has stated, the post is important to the safety of the universes."

Mrs. Weasley hesitated, then opened her mouth.

"Excuse me?" Ginny stood up and walked over. "I am here, Mum. I'm fourteen, not four. I want to have a say in this."

Once more, Mrs. Weasley opened her mouth, but Dumbledore held up a hand. "Why don't we let her speak?" he asked. She glared but didn't say anything.

"Thank you," Ginny said to Dumbledore. Then she faced her parents. "Dad, Mum, I want to do this! This is something special, something that I'm needed for, something that I can _do_! As for it being dangerous, well, after all, I've still got six lives. And it could hardly be as bad as the Chamber of Secrets, could it?" She smiled at her mother. "Besides, it'll be fun."

"Well," Mrs. Weasley began, looking at Chrestomanci, "Would she be able to come home if she wished to?"

"Of course," he said. "She'll have to live at my castle while being trained, but she can come to visit as soon as she masters traveling between worlds. And she'll have company â€" my own children and another."

Ginny smiled. "Let me try, Mum, all right? If I don't like it, well, I can come home."

"Oh," she said helplessly, "All right. If your father agrees."

Ginny turned to her father. "Dad, please?"

"Have fun in those other worlds," he said, smiling. "And write home lots."

"Oh, I will," she said, crying a little with excitement and happiness. "Thanks, Mum!"

TO BE CONTINUED

2. Out of this world....

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Out of This World

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Part 2

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A bit less about Ginny and Chrestomanci here; they'll be back, don't worry. To those of you who were wondering about Jenny, this is an alternate reality story and she is dead in Sirius' universe, and the life-bond did not take place there.

The disclaimer is the same as before.

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The journey up to Hogwarts took two days, because Remus was forced to stop in London and report his findings to the Ministry. He had sent an owl to Hogwarts as soon as he had arrived, so they knew what was happening, but he still had to tell the Ministry about his exploits first.

Finally he was cleared to go to Hogwarts, and he went straight to King's Cross. The Hogwarts Express only ran on the first and last day of every term, but there were always trains going to Hogsmeade, and it was one of these that he boarded, small suitcase in hand. He had traveled light through the Continent, it saved a great deal of trouble.

It was a night train, and Remus was happy to get some sleep after the journey up from Albania. He felt well enough, for the full moon was not for a fortnight, and he carried some of the Wolfsbane Potion with him when he traveled, enough to serve. Dumbledore had coaxed and flattered Snape into making some more, though Remus knew Snape would have probably preferred being boiled alive. But he had been up all night at the Ministry and was worn out. He slept, and did not dream.

The hoot of the train woke him in time to rub the sleep from his eyes and get off the train at Hogsmeade Station. The platform was no busier than usual, and he didn't think he had been recognized, which was as well. The cry of 'werewolf!' going up around the station would not be a good ending to this journey, even if he did have Dumbledore's protection.

But he was not recognized, and he walked up through the town to the school, noticing that the Shrieking Shack was still boarded up, a physical symbol of his past. Despite it, he found the walk refreshing and was wide awake again by the time he came to the gates of Hogwarts.

He went through the grounds, spotting a Herbology class following Professor Sprout around the grounds to look at some rare plant, and some first years having flying lessons on the Quidditch pitch. He was glad to be back at Hogwarts. The students seemed to be happy and full of enthusiasm, he could hear the chatter from where he was walking. It was something more than that, too. He felt he had come home.

But as the bearer of bad news, he reminded himself, looking up at the tall castle and walking towards the front door. He did not knock, but went straight in and through the achingly familiar corridors to Dumbledore's office.

Dumbledore opened the door as he approached. This would have startled Remus once, but he was too used to the old wizard's methods to be surprised now.

'Remus, good to see you,' he said. 'Come in, have a seat.'

'Good morning,' said Remus politely. He took a seat opposite the old wizard, and scanned his face. Dumbledore did not look much different from usual, a little tired perhaps, but very cheerful.

'I got your owl,' said the Headmaster. 'You lost Pettigrew's trail?'

'Not exactly, but I couldn't follow him any further. He â€" well, I think he jumped into another world.'

Dumbledore nodded. 'That makes sense. We've had a few strange things happening here lately. There is trouble with the other worlds, with World 12A in particular.'

'World 12A?' echoed Remus. 'I don't remember which one that is.'

'Well, it's not crucial exactly which it is. We've had a visitor from there, he left last night. It's all a bit complicated, really. Would you like a cup of tea?'

'Yes please.'

Dumbledore rose and bustled around filling a kettle and boiling it with a tap of his wand. As he poured the tea, he said, 'Well, tell me about Albania. Do you know exactly where Peter went?'

'I'm afraid not. I couldn't seem to follow him, or work out where he'd gone.' Remus sipped the hot tea slowly, declining Dumbledore's offer of milk and sugar. 'But I am certain he went into another world.'

'Hmm.' Dumbledore looked thoughtful for a moment. 'We really must find him. Where he is, there Voldemort will be as well, I expect. Can I ask you to keep on at this, please? It should be possible to work out which worlds Pettigrew could be in, and then â€" then, we'll see what we can do about it.'

'All right,' said Remus. 'It shouldn't be that tricky, I suppose, there are only nine possibilities. We just have to try them all. Can I have the use of a laboratory, please?'

'Of course you may. I only have one clue as to where he might have gone, and it's not really certain. You see, Voldemort was definitely in World 12A four days ago. As I said, we had a visitor from there, who was thrown into this world when Voldemort attempted to kill him, and succeeded in killing his apprentice. It is a great tragedy, for the apprentice is one of the very rare nine-lived wizards.'

Remus nodded. 'I've studied about them a little bit. Do you agree with the theory that Voldemort may be one himself?'

'It's difficult to know,' said Dumbledore slowly. 'Certainly it is a possibility. Anyway, the enchanter who came here found himself another apprentice to train.' A smile emerged from behind Dumbledore's moustache. 'A student of ours, with nine lives. I was most impressed. I myself had not been aware of it.'

'Harry?' asked Remus in alarm. 'The enchanter took Harry?'

'No,' said Dumbledore. 'Again, I had suspected that he might have had nine lives, but that is not the case. No, the student he took was none other than Ginny Weasley.'

'Ginny?' Remus felt foolish. He had taught the girl himself, but though her use of magic was slightly erratic, he had never suspected

that she was anything out of the ordinary. 'Really? I would never have thought it.'

'Indeed.'

Remus smiled. 'So she's gone to world 12A?' Dumbledore nodded, sipping his tea. 'Is that where Voldemort is, then?'

'It is a possibility. But Voldemort's assault took place at an unusually magical site, a place where there is a gateway not only between the worlds of our series but between the other eleven Related Worlds as well.'

Remus caught his breath. 'Does that mean I have to search them as well?' He was shaking his head. 'That's impossible. There are hundreds.'

'No, fortunately I am quite certain that Voldemort is not capable of leaving Series Twelve, and Pettigrew certainly is not. Once you have found them, I think we will enlist the help of Ginny and Chrestomanci to help us get them back again.'

'That's good. So, anywhere in the Series. Well, I guess I'd better start looking.' He hesitated. 'Is Sirius going to be busy, or can I get his help?'

'Remus, you may do exactly as you wish. All I want is for you to find Pettigrew and locate the world to which Voldemort has gone. Apart from that, you have a free hand.'

Remus smiled again. 'Thank you,' he said. 'I'll get started immediately.' He finished his tea and rose to his feet.

'Well, I am glad you're here, Remus. Good luck.' Dumbledore also rose and the door swung open by itself. They shook hands, and Remus went out. As he walked through the corridors, absently avoiding the trick step and the false corridors, he wondered how he was going to find Pettigrew if he'd traveled to another world.

As he went past the staircase that led down to the kitchens, he could smell food cooking, and realised that it was Halloween today. How had he lost track of time like that? He smiled at a few students he knew, most of whom grinned back. A few, however, avoided him, and he tried not to let them bother him.

Well, he would speak to Sirius, and then they could get started. He was running over in his mind the different things that could be done to find Peter and Voldemort, and recalled something that he had read. Nobody could enter a world in which their double was still living. It was only possible to move into a world where the double had already died. If two doubles chanced to meet, there would be an explosion that would destroy the entire Series, and for this reason he knew that it was impossible that they should be in the same world at the same time. That might make things easier. Remus hurried through the corridors, lost in thought.

It was easy enough to find Sirius' office; it had been his own two years before. Sirius was sitting at the desk, a stack of papers by his elbow, but he wasn't reading any of them. His head was in his hands. Remus glanced at the picture on his desk and swallowed a lump

that welled up in his own throat.

Sirius must have heard, because he swung around, and a grin crossed his face so quickly that it seemed to Remus that he had imagined the shadow of pain.

'Moony! I've been wondering when you'd drop in. Sit down. How are you?'

'I'm fine, thanks. How's the job going? I never would have thought you'd be a teacher.' Remus sat in the other chair. His friend nodded.

'It's not quite what I expected, but it is rather enjoyable. I'm not sure they'll learn that much from me, though.'

'Sirius, Harry's year, at least, is going to be either the best or worst prepared to face Dark Arts in the history of Hogwarts,' Remus said dryly. 'Look who they've had before you!'

'A traitor, a git, a â€"well, I have no idea about last year's professor, other than that he died â€" and one decent professor.'" Sirius raised an eyebrow. 'It's always, 'Professor Lupin this' and 'Professor Lupin that'.'

Remus laughed, a little touched by that.

But I hardly think this visit is just for pleasure,' Sirius said shrewdly. 'Your last letter said you almost had Wormtail.'

'I did.' Remus sighed. 'He - he jumped to another world. I came here, to warn Dumbledore that Voldemort could be in another world as well, but he already knew. He told me about Chrestomanci, and Ginny.'

'Yes,' Sirius said. His eyes sparkled fiercely as he looked at Remus. 'You said that Pettigrew's in another world? Which one?'

'I don't know. Dumbledore says he's probably still in Series 12, but that still leaves eight choices.'

'So how do we find him?'

Remus grinned. 'I'm glad you want to help.'

'Oh, just you try to stop me.' Sirius stood up. 'Where do we go from here?'

'Dumbledore's letting me use one of the labs.' Remus stood as well. 'I suggest we go there.'

The friends hurried down the corridors together, passing by the Great Hall, though the food smells beckoned enticingly. They entered a cold room, large and full of shining silver instruments. Sirius grinned and touched a set of silver balls, setting them rocking back and forth in their cradle. 'Remember how we'd break into the labs now and then, to get instruments for our schemes?'

'Of course.' Remus smiled back. 'Who was it who had to stand guard while you and James raided the place, anyway? At least you two had

the Cloak.'

'I still feel a little guilty about being in here,' Sirius commented. 'Afraid that Filch will show up any second and give me detention.'

'It is a bit odd, teaching here, isn't it? A strange feeling,' Remus agreed. He picked up a steel and glass device. 'We'll use scrying glasses first, I think. If we can identify worlds where Pettigrew is alive still, we can eliminate those.'

'How will we know if it's our Pettigrew or theirs?' Sirius asked, also taking a glass.

'We can't be sure - but if he has all ten fingers, he's not the same one.'

'Right. Start at the beginning, then?' Sirius pulled out his wand and stared at the glass.

'You start with World A, I'll start with World I, and we'll work toward each other.' Remus adjusted his device.

'Right.' Sirius stared into the glass.

Shapes became visible, slowly. At first only blurs, they soon began to sharpen and come into focus. Suddenly, he recognised Chrestomanci, and Ginny. They were together, apparently studying something. Ginny had a frown of concentration on her face as she listened to Chrestomanci's words, which Sirius could not hear. Suddenly, Chrestomanci looked up, straight at Sirius, a vague look on his face. Ginny noticed after a moment, and looked as well. For a moment she seemed puzzled; then, suddenly, she seemed to realize what Chrestomanci had seen. She grinned and waved, saying something inaudible.

Sirius jerked up. 'Remus, I thought people in other worlds couldn't tell when they're being watched through these glasses.'

'They shouldn't be able to tell.' Remus looked up worriedly. 'Why? Pettigrew didn't see you, did he?'

'No, I just saw Ginny and Chrestomanci, and it was plain that they could see me.' Sirius frowned at him. 'Why is that?'

Remus thought briefly. 'Probably because they're enchanters,' he said finally. 'Any sign of Pettigrew?'

'No, I haven't had a chance to look.' Sirius looked at Remus. 'You?'

'Oh, I found him - a double of him, that is. In Azkaban.' Remus shook his head slowly. 'Where ours belongs. This one was stark raving mad.'

'I'll keep looking.' Sirius peered into the glass once more, and they both scanned the worlds, the guiding spells drawing them towards the places where Pettigrew might be.

It was very late when Sirius gave a shout. 'Remus! Here he

is!'

'Where?' Remus hurried over and looked in Sirius' glass. 'Yes, that's him - is it the right one?'

'I think so.' Sirius smiled grimly. 'There's the scar I gave him last year.'

'Yes, that's him. Which world is this?'

'Um â€¦ E, I think. Yes, world E. What do we do now?' Sirius stared into the scrying glass again, his eyes fierce. 'The rat,' he murmured under his breath.

'We'd better tell Dumbledore, and then I suppose we'll have to go and find him.' Remus set down his own scrying glass and started for the door.

'It's rather late,' Sirius said, cancelling the spells that were operating the scrying glass. 'Almost midnight. I hope he'll let us start at once.'

'Yes, it'll be much easier if we do it now, because the barriers between the worlds will be weaker than usual.'

'What?' Sirius looked up with a start.

'It's Halloween,' Remus explained. 'The barriers between worlds are always thinner at this time, because of all the magic around.'

'Then we should go straight away.' Sirius turned back to the piles of shining devices. 'We should take any advantage we have, and it is almost midnight.' He threw a glance at the clock. 'We've got to hurry.'

'We really should tell Dumbledore,' Remus said. 'What if there's something we don't know? And what if we can't get into world E?'

'There's no time for that. We'll find out whether we can get in or not soon enough. Come on, I don't know all the things you do about these spells. We're wasting time.'

Remus sighed and gave in, knowing it was all but impossible to change Sirius' mind once he had made it up. 'All right, then. We should hurry. No need to waste more time and Dumbledore would just say go ahead, I'm sure.' He crossed the room to Sirius' side. 'It's quite a complicated spell, but we've got all the stuff we need here.' He rummaged through the shelves and picked up a silver device, wincing a little. 'You do this bit,' he said, passing it to Sirius. 'All you have to do is adjust it for World E.'

Sirius fumbled with the device for a few moments. 'Now what?'

'Put it on the table, there.' Remus paused to think. 'I don't know if this is going to work,' he said doubtfully.

'Just do it,' said Sirius sharply. 'There's no time to worry about it. Do you know the spell?'

'Yes, yes.' Remus' face was concerned.

'Then work it.'

Remus took a deep breath and began to say some words. After he finished the first sentence he reached out and took Sirius' hands. Everything began to spin and spin, and then the lights vanished and the world went black.

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The fire was dying. Jenny got up and went to the hearth. She poked the embers and threw on another log. After a bit of coaxing, it blazed up again. She sat down on the stool by the grate and stared into it for a while.

Andrea went to the window and looked out. She knew better than to talk to Jenny in one of these moods â€" Jenny would only snap at her, and Andrea didn't blame her. She stared into the sky. The moon was hidden behind thick clouds, and it wasn't full tonight in any case. But she stared up regardless until she began to shiver. The windows were old and draughty, and she could feel the wind through them. She went to sit with Lily. James was out officiating at a Halloween event in his capacity as Minister of Magic, but Lily had chosen to stay and keep Andrea and Jenny company. They all had a loss to remember on this night.

Lily smiled at her gently as she sat down on the sofa. Andrea said nothing, but she leaned her head against her friend's shoulder, twisting the ring she always wore around and around her finger.

'Fourteen years,' said Lily slowly. 'I can scarcely imagine what Harry would look like now.'

Andrea turned to her. 'He would look just like James did,' she said with confidence. 'He did even right after he was born.' She thought of the summer's night when she had delivered Harry, not in the Halls of Healing where she worked but in the Potters' old house in Godric's Hollow. That was gone too.

'This is morbid,' said Jenny hotly, whirling around to face them. 'Sitting around talking and thinking about all these dead people. You know it doesn't help.'

Andrea sighed. 'We don't do it often. It's not a bad thing to remember sometimes. It's not easy to celebrate tonight.'

Jenny laughed harshly. 'No. It's not.' She glanced out the window as the night sky was illuminated with fireworks. 'Seems we're the only people who think so, though.' She stood up. 'I'm surprised at James, going off to open the festivities. Celebrating his son's and his best friends' death.'

Lily flinched a little, and Andrea caught her hand. 'You know you don't mean that, Jenny. He has to do it, it's his job, and it's not easy on him either,' said Andrea soothingly. 'But after all, it is in honor of their memories. And Voldemort's disappearance is something to celebrate.'

Jenny sighed. 'I know, I know. We've said it all before. And he's the Minister, he has to put on a good face, I know that too.' She sighed. 'It just makes me sick. When they were alive, did anyone care? But now that they're dead they have all these parties in honor of them and all that, and it doesn't do any good. None of those people' â€" she waved a hand at the window â€" 'know that Voldemort is coming back again.' She paced across the room. 'They don't know that all the deaths and all the pain was for nothing, because he's coming back, do they?' She stopped in front of Andrea and Lily. 'All for nothing,' she repeated. Lily rose and reached out a hand to her, pulling her down onto the sofa beside her. Jenny looked mutinous for a moment, then allowed Lily to take her into her arms.

'Twelve years of peace is something,' said Andrea gently. 'I know it's selfish of me, but I'd rather have Remus.' She said the name with some difficulty. Jenny and Lily both nodded.

'It's stupid of me to be so maudlin and silly tonight,' said Jenny, sitting up again. 'I mean, we all have good lives and everything, almost everything we could want. And it's not as though â€" not as though they died yesterday. Aren't fourteen years long enough for me to learn?'

Andrea managed a smile, but said nothing. She knew Jenny was right. But the pain that was in her heart let her do nothing but smile weakly. It had been fourteen years ago tonight that Voldemort had murdered her fiancÃ©, and not even the passage of time could fully numb the pain. And she knew that Jenny felt the same pain. And Lily â€" her loss was perhaps the most terrible of all; her only child. She could have no others, Andrea knew all too well.

The room began to feel oppressively hot around Andrea. She shuffled restlessly on the sofa. Beside her, Lily looked equally uncomfortable.

'Shall I go open a window?' asked Andrea.

Lily nodded, and Andrea rose. But before she reached the window, it seemed it had already been opened, for a wind blew all around the room. Andrea turned in confusion. The wind did not so much as ruffle her hair or move the papers, but she could feel it on her face.

'What â€"' she began, then turned. Jenny was staring around her as if she expected something to crawl out from under the sofa, and Lily looked equally worried.

The wind rose and rose, until it was ripping the very breath from Andrea's mouth and making her eyes water. Nothing moved in the room, and the three women were silent, waiting for something to happen.

Andrea became aware that the wind was spiraling around a certain point, and she watched it intently. Two forms were taking shape, tall figures spinning around and around in the wind. Andrea stared and stared through her watering eyes. She stepped forwards through the wind uncertainly, watching. This was not how Apparation happened, this was something altogether different. She put her hand on her wand.

Abruptly, the wind ceased, and two tall strangers were standing with their backs turned, very dizzy. Andrea started forwards as one of the men half-turned towards her, about to fall, and caught his arm. The other man rested his hand on the mantle and stood very still.

'You'd better sit downâ€" ' she began in her most professional manner as the first man looked towards her, his eyes still unfocussed. He blinked rapidly. She stared at his face. It was lined and careworn, and his hair was turning to gray, but there was no way she could have mistaken him. He stumbled a little towards her, and Andrea pulled him to an armchair, the other man forgotten. She stared at his pallor, wondering, but he was not a ghost, for she was touching him and his skin was warm.

'Remus?'

She was glad to perch on the edge of the armchair; her legs felt weak and shaky. She stared at Remus, devouring him with her eyes.

'Andrea,' he said. It was not a question. They held each other with their eyes for a long, long time, each searching the other's face. Then Andrea slid off the side of the chair into his arms, holding him so closely that she couldn't breathe. She felt her heart might stop with joy and disbelief.

'What â€" how â€" whyâ€"?' she stammered when he relaxed his grip a little and she had enough breath to speak. They both looked up.

'I thought you were dead,' they said simultaneously, with matching tones of intense concern and incredulity.

The tension and shock made Andrea giggle helplessly for a moment, and Remus stroked her back with a soothing hand.

'Sweetheart, I'm alive,' he said. 'But I thought you were dead.'

Andrea's slightly hysterical laughter stopped as she pulled herself together and she met his eye. 'I thought you were dead,' she said worriedly. 'Where have you been?' She remembered the other stranger suddenly, and tore her eyes away from Remus momentarily.

Across the room by the fire, Jenny was standing in the arms of the other man. Andrea did not recognize him at all, but Jenny was wrapped in his embrace as tightly as she herself was held in Remus'.

'Who's that?' she asked him. Remus looked around the room for the first time and gasped.

'It's Sirius, of course,' he said absently when she persisted, still gaping at the room and at Lily, who sat on the sofa watching with intent curiosity.

Looking again, Andrea saw some of the hints of the old Sirius in the man's face, but he was greatly changed. But he looked very happy.

'I've been here before,' said Remus suddenly, abruptly. 'I've dreamed of this place.'

'You've never been here before,' Andrea answered, looking back from Sirius with confusion plain in her eyes. 'You were ...gone when James bought it.' She clutched him again. 'Remus, Remus, are you sure this isn't a dream as well?'

'If it is, may I never wake,' he said softly. 'I don't care what it is. For the first time in fourteen years, I have my Andrea.'

Moving as one, they kissed.

Loud voices startled Andrea into looking up, several eternities later. Jenny was standing apart from Sirius, and they were noisily arguing about something. Andrea almost laughed. She knew she could not be dreaming this.

'What do you mean, another world? You can't have been dead for fourteen years, you've been in a lunatic asylum, evidently. Where have you been, Sirius? Why did you do this to me?' She noticed that Remus and Andrea were both looking on with slightly amused expressions, and whirled on them. 'And you, Mister Remus Lupin. Vanishing like that, every single person believed you were dead, they're even having a memorial feast in your honor tonight, and here you pop up like you've never been gone.' She paused for breath.

'Jenny, just listen to me for a moment, okay?' Sirius caught her arm and turned her to face him. 'We're looking for Pettigrewâ€'

'You killed that lying traitor fourteen years ago, idiot. Don't you remember?' Jenny stared at Sirius' genuinely puzzled face. 'Sirius, what's wrong with you?' she demanded, and her voice sounded more concerned than angry now. 'Andrea, has he got something wrong with his â€' with his mind?'

Andrea had been listening with an equal concern. She turned to Remus. 'Where have you come from?' she asked quietly. 'Where have you been all these years?'

'There's nothing wrong with my mind,' Sirius was protesting. 'If you'd just let me explainâ€|.'

'We are chasing Peter Pettigrew,' said Remus calmly, 'and we have come from another world. One where we're alive, and you all are dead.' The last word fell heavily into the now-silent room. In the pause that followed, the sound of the fire crackling seemed far too loud.

'But â€' but how?' asked Andrea at last. She did not doubt the truth of Remus' words, but she did not understand how it could be possible, all the same.

Jenny and Sirius had both turned to look at him. Lily, too, was listening intently.

'You'd better come and sit down and explain this sensibly,' she said. Andrea gave her a sharp glance, for there was a note of pain in her voice. She looked at Jenny standing with Sirius, and realized that of

the three people who had died that night fourteen years ago, only two had returned. She went to sit at Lily's side, and Remus followed her.

'You explain, Moony, Jenny probably won't shout at you.' Sirius grinned, and waved Jenny towards the place beside him on one of the sofas. She did not sit for a moment, then suddenly sank down beside him and took his hand. Andrea smiled to herself. It was as if the fourteen years had not gone by. Jenny and Sirius had always argued and sharpened their tongues on each other, and always made up again very touchingly. But fourteen years had passed, she reminded herself, looking at the lines on Remus' face and his gray hairs, at the worried and unhappy look in his eyes that not even her kiss had completely banished. It has been fourteen years, she told herself. How will he be changed? A sudden, horrible thought struck her. What if he's found someone else?

'I'm not sure where to begin,' said Remus doubtfully. 'Well, let's see. Peter Pettigrew is very much alive. He's hiding here somewhere, and we have to find him and bring him back.'

'Back where? Where have you come from?' asked Jenny.

'Back to the â€" oh, how on earth do I explain this? Look, you've heard about alternate universes, right?'

The three women all nodded, dawning expressions of comprehension appearing on their faces.

'Well, that's where we've come from. An alternate universe where we're alive, and so is Pettigrew, but you three are â€" are dead.'

'Where's James?' asked Sirius suddenly. 'Why isn't he here? Is he alive?' He looked at Lily with concern.

'James is alive,' she said slowly. 'He's up in London, because of the festivities.'

'James is the Minister of Magic,' added Jenny, a too-innocent smile on her face.

'WHAT?' exploded Sirius. 'Prongs is the Minister?' He roared with laughter. 'This place is great. I've never heard such a brilliant joke in my life.'

Remus was grinning as well. 'Anyway,' he said when he could be heard above Sirius' laughter, 'I'm not sure how we ended up here, but â€" well, I'm not too unhappy about it.'

'You know, I don't really get this alternate universe thing,' said Andrea. 'You mean there's a place where I'm dead?'

Remus sobered. 'I'm afraid so. I live there.'

Suddenly Andrea caught his hand. 'Are you going to have to go back there?'

Everyone turned to stare at her in great alarm. Remus took her hand in both of his. 'I have to go back, yes, and so does Sirius.'

Andrea sank back in the sofa resignedly. 'I knew it was too good to be true.'

'We don't know enough about how all this works to be sure of it, Moony, don't forget,' said Sirius. 'It might be possible to â€" to arrange something. There's no reason why we can't keep traveling between these two worlds.'

'Hmm,' said Remus. 'Don't forget that the only reason we could get through tonight was because it's Halloween, and the boundaries are thinner. It'll be very difficult to get back again, though the book I was reading said it's always easier returning to your home world than getting out of it, because you're drawn to it.' He paused, thinking. 'I think the reason we came through at this particular place was because of you and Jenny,' he said, turning to Andrea. 'Were you thinking of us, before we arrived?'

'Oh yes,' said Andrea with some vim.

'Of course we were,' added Jenny.

'Well, the force of your thought would have pulled us this way, I think.' Remus frowned. 'But I'm not sure. Well, we'll see.'

Lily looked at Sirius and Remus for a long time. 'What about Harry?' she asked finally. 'Is he â€" is he alive in your world?'

Sirius grinned. 'Harry is very much alive,' he said. 'Alive and causing chaos at Hogwarts. How come he's not here, anyway? Is he with James?'

There was a pause, a heartbeat too long to be comfortable. Jenny looked daggers at Sirius. 'Harry â€" Harry's dead,' she said bluntly.

Sirius gasped, and swore. 'Oh, Lily, Lily, I'm sorry,' he said, getting up and crossing to her. 'I didn't know.' He bent down beside her and took her hands in his. 'Forgive me.'

'It's all right, Sirius, you weren't to know,' she said with an effort. 'I â€" I'm glad to hear he's well in your world.' Andrea looked at her and saw that she was very pale.

The door creaked open. 'What's going on?' demanded a loud male voice. Everyone looked around.

'James!' said Jenny. 'You â€" you're â€" just come over here,' she stammered.

'Who are these people? Lily? Is there a problem?' James asked, pulling out his wand and striding across the room to where Sirius was bending over Lily. Sirius turned.

'Fine welcome for your friends, Prongs,' he said, but there was a grin on his face and in his voice.

'What the -?' swore James. 'This is absurd. I didn't â€" no, no, this is ridiculous.' He looked past Sirius at Remus and Andrea, who was

getting to her feet.

'James, sit down,' she said quickly, for he had turned white at Sirius' words. He baulked, but she caught his arm and pushed him into the sofa beside Lily. 'You're not imagining things, it's Remus and Sirius.' He gaped at her, opened his mouth to speak, looked at the grinning Sirius and closed it again.

'Moony?' he said, turning the other way. Remus' grin was almost as wide as Sirius'.

'The very one,' Remus replied.

James hesitated fractionally, looking around at the smiles everyone was wearing, and got up and embraced them both. 'I don't know how this is happening and I don't know what's going on, but I am very glad to see you again,' he said, muffled against Sirius' shoulder. Andrea laughed.

'We'll explain,' said Remus. James looked at Lily, who was doing her best to appear happy for James' sake. He sat down beside her.

Remus began to explain again, and James listened patiently. Occasionally the others would interject with explanations and expansions, but mostly it was Remus speaking. When they were done, he took a deep breath.

'You've arrived at the right moment. I had some bad news when I got here, but you got there before me. Someone detected the breach between the worlds that Pettigrew made, and incidentally also the one you made, but yours didn't reek of Dark Magic. Pettigrew's did, though of course nobody will think it's him because he's dead here.' James frowned. 'Can you only get between worlds if your counterpart is dead in the world you're going to?'

'Unless you're a spirit traveler, in which case you don't really go through the boundaries, you just project yourself,' Remus explained. 'Or unless you're a nine-lived enchanter like the Chrestomanci.'

'A spirit traveler?' asked Jenny. 'I always thought they were myths. Do you mean the people who claim to go into other worlds in dreams or something?'

'That's right. They're very rare. I've never met a good one.'

James was nodding too. 'We keep tabs on them all â€" they're not myths, but it's better to keep quiet about it because most people don't know about the existence of other worlds. All the stuff you've been telling us is classified information here.'

'Oh, it is in our world too,' said Sirius. 'You wouldn't believe all the red tape you're supposed to go through if you want to know about this. Luckily Remus knows everything already, and we had the Chrestomanci there as well, and he told us some stuff. But the Minister will probably have us clapped in irons when we get back, unless we have Pettigrew, because what we've done is completely illegal.' He yawned and sat down again beside Jenny, who had been unexpectedly quiet throughout this discussion. Andrea saw her murmur something to him, and she smiled.

'I'm knackered,' Sirius announced after a few minutes of silence.
'Can I sleep on the sofa or something, Lily?'

Lily had been sitting lost in abstraction, and now she jolted back.
'Don't be silly. This is a big house, there's plenty of room. No need to sleep on the sofa.' She got up. 'I'll go and make up some beds and things. I think you'd all better stay, it's a bit late to be going back home and you'll probably want to be here in the morning.' She caught Andrea's eye and smiled.

'Let me help,' said Remus, and Andrea followed suit. James stayed talking to Jenny and Sirius in the sitting room while the three of them went upstairs.

'I just can't believe it,' said Lily. 'All of you here, and alive, and Harry too.' She looked at Remus with scantily disguised curiosity. 'How is Harry?'

'Harry is doing brilliantly. He's doing well in school, he's in Gryffindor, of course, and he's the Seeker. He's the spitting image of James when he was that age. He gets into as much trouble as James did as well.'

Andrea grinned. 'I thought he would be.'

Lily nodded. 'I â€" this sounds stupid â€" I'm dead in that world, aren't I?'

'That's right.' Remus looked very sober again as they went into one of the guestrooms and began making up a bed. 'I suppose â€" no, of course, you wouldn't know. In that world, you and James died to save Harry from Voldemort, and Voldemort lost most of his power when he failed to kill Harry.' He sighed. 'Peter survived, as you've realized â€" Sirius only went after him the following morning, and he didn't catch up with him.' His eyes became very troubled, and Andrea put a hand on his arm, suspecting that the next part of his story was bad. 'Sirius â€" he was convicted of betraying you both and working for Voldemort, he spent twelve years in Azkaban.'

Lily sat down hard on the bed, and Andrea tightened her grip on Remus' arm. 'No!'

'But â€" but he's sane, he â€" I mean, people go mad in Azkaban within a few days. Sirius is sane, as sane as he ever was.' Andrea managed a weak smile.

'It's a miracle how he survived. It was the Animagus transformation that saved him â€" the Dementors don't really affect animals the same way.' His face darkened. 'Peter survived the same way, he spent twelve years living as a rat.' Remus gave a heavy sigh, and sat down beside Lily.

'You look worn out,' said Andrea gently. 'Traveling here can't have been easy.'

'It wasn't,' Remus agreed. He smiled at her. 'But if I'd had to fight Voldemort with nothing but a rusty wire I'd have tried it if I'd known what I'd find here.' He pulled her down beside him. Neither noticed when Lily discreetly left the room.

'What's going to happen now, Remus?' Andrea asked quietly. 'I know you can't stay here forever. What are we going to do?'

'I don't know, love.' He dropped the last syllable heavily on the air. 'Are you happy here?'

'Most of the time, yes.' She smiled a little. 'Fourteen years, Remus. That's a long time. I'm frightened.' Her hands knotted on each other. 'What's happened to you during those years?' She took a deep breath. 'I'm afraid, I'm frightened I'll look at you and you'll be a stranger.'

He stretched out a hand and took hers. 'I'm frightened too.'

She leaned into his shoulder where she had once fit so perfectly. 'And â€" and I don't know, Remus, am I the same person you loved in your world? I can't be, can I? Are you the same Remus I loved here?'

'There's no way to tell,' he said slowly. 'But I see you and you are Andrea. That's enough for me.' His slow smile crossed his face, the same smile that had caught her heart with its hint of sadness. 'What do you say?'

'In your world â€" how did I die?'

The intense pain that crossed Remus' face made her flinch. 'Voldemort killed you. It was the night after you â€" after you said you'd marry me. And he came and he killed you.'

Andrea gasped. 'That's what happened here â€" I mean, he didn't kill me, but he attacked. I got away, just, I was saved by a distraction.' She looked intently at Remus. 'Does that mean â€" does that mean it was the same until then?' Her voice became intense. 'That night, it was the full moon,' she said. 'I went home with you and you asked me to marry you.'

Remus' eyes were bright. 'You stayed with me until I had transformed,' he continued, 'and then you went to replace Lily and James at the house in Mill Road.'

'Yes.' Andrea clutched Remus. 'So â€" so you are the same person.' Remus squeezed her hand, then lifted it to inspect it. Andrea saw his eyes widen as he saw the ring she wore. She said nothing, and neither did he. He lifted her hand again and kissed it.

Andrea leaned against him again, and she did fit into his shoulder perfectly. His arms went around her, and they held her perfectly. She turned her face towards him. His kiss had not changed over those fourteen years.

~

Sirius glanced at James and tried to read his friend's face. It had been such a long time since they'd seen each other, and it seemed that they had a thousand things to discuss. But James was hiding a yawn now. It was rather late; he noticed the clock on the mantel read two in the morning.

Lily came downstairs quietly. She put her hands on her hips. "All of

you should go to bed now," she said sternly. James grinned at her.

"All right, Lily, I'll come up."

She turned to Sirius. "You can have the room second on the right upstairs," she said. "We turned down the bed. And Jenny, you can take your usual one."

Jenny smiled at Lily. "I think I'm going to step outside for a moment before I go to bed," she said quietly. "I need some fresh air."

Lily looked at her piercingly, but said nothing. Then Lily and James headed upstairs. Sirius watched them go, and turned to find the room empty. He saw the door swing shut behind Jenny. He went after her.

She was standing outside. The moon had already set, but the stars seemed close enough to count. Jenny was staring out at the dark houses along the road.

Sirius walked over to where she stood but didn't say anything. After a moment, she turned and looked at him.

"Is it really you, Sirius?" she asked quietly. He smiled.

"Yes, Jenny." He waited a moment, but she didn't say anything. "I missed you, Jenny."

"And I missed you" oh, I missed you." The pain in her voice was very audible. "Every day I missed you." She turned away. "And now I'm frightened, and I don't know what frightens me more" that you'll leave or that you'll stay." He could barely make out her words.

"I don't understand, Jenny," he said slowly.

"Sooner or later, you'll want to go back, won't you?"

"I don't know." He looked at her, but her head was still turned. "It's soon yet to say."

"But if you don't-" she stopped. After a long moment, she said, "but are you the same person I loved, years and years ago? Or are you someone else, an -an imposter?"

Sirius didn't answer at once. Then he said, "Jenny, of course I'm not the same person you knew those years ago. Nor are you the woman I loved then. We've both changed, Jenny. We've both lived, had different experiences, changed. I'd have changed even had we married and lived happily all these years. But I still love you."

"Is that enough?" she whispered, finally looking at him again.

"I don't know," he admitted, taking her hands. "But we could try and see." He pulled her close and kissed her, slowly.

To Be Continued....

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3. Blast from the Past

> <meta name="ProgId"> Out of This World â€" Part III

Out of This World â€" Part III

Dawn broke slowly over the silent house, but nobody woke until many hours later. Andrea only woke when the sun was high in the sky and she heard the sounds of Lily and James talking outside her door. She lay back, still sleepy, not troubling to make out their conversation through the wall.

Remus, she thought suddenly, he was here last night. Or had that been a dream? She shook her head to clear it. No, it had not been a dream, her Remus had returned. Or Remus Lupin had returned, at any rate. Whether he was her Remus or not could not be said for certain. Last night she had wanted to believe he was.

She looked at the clock and leapt out of bed. She was already half an hour late for work. In a muddle-fingered frenzy she washed and dressed and tugged her hair back out of her face. Why, she wondered angrily, why was it that everything was twice as difficult to find and do when she was in a hurry?

She pelted down the stairs.

'Good morning,' said Lily cheerfully. 'Sleep well?'

'Why didn't someone wake me?' Andrea demanded. 'I should have been in the Halls forty minutes ago.'

'You needed to sleep,' said Lily gently. 'You were up till â€" I don't know when, your light was still on at three in the morning.' She smiled. 'So were the lights in Jenny's room, I rather think. Haven't seen either her or Sirius this morning. James has already gone off to the Ministry.' A worried look crossed her face. 'He got an urgent owl and he had to rush off â€" there wasn't time for him to explain what it was, but it's something to do with Voldemort.'

Andrea gasped. 'No!' She stared at Lily for a moment, and then sighed. 'Well, we knew it was coming. Has he â€" done anything?'

'I don't know.'

Andrea reached to the hook where her white cloak was hanging, and flung it across her shoulders. 'I've got to go straight away. If things aren't too busy I might be able to come back at lunch, but â€" just tell Remus where I've gone, okay?'

'Of course. You really should have something to eat first,' Lily began, but Andrea cut her off.

'I'll get something at the Halls. Bye, Lily.' She picked up her wand and Disapparated.

~

It was considerably later that Remus woke, and went down to breakfast. Jenny, Lily and Sirius were sitting around the table in the parlour, munching toast and marmalade, and sipping cups of tea.

"Mornin'," said Sirius with a grin, swallowing a mouthful of toast. "Sleep well?"

Remus nodded.

"Andrea's already gone to the Halls of Healing," said Jenny, catching his eye as he entered and answering his unspoken question. "She never stops working."

Remus pulled out the chair opposite Lily and sat down. She poured him some tea, and added neither milk nor sugar. He smiled suddenly. She still remembered the way he took tea, after fourteen years. Sirius and Jenny kept catching each other's eye across the table and smiling in a way that made him wish Andrea hadn't been in such a hurry to go.

"James gone to work?" he asked politely. Lily nodded.

"The Ministry is a bit of a mess at the moment," she said. "I suppose I'd better tell you that he got a letter this morning saying that Voldemort has made an appearance."

Sirius gave a dark scowl, and Jenny looked horrified. Remus sighed.

"Is Pettigrew helping him, then?" asked Sirius.

"I don't know." Lily frowned. "He raced off up to London as soon as he got the letter. He said he'd come back at lunch and talk to you then." She looked at Remus. "Andrea said she'd be back for lunch too."

"Good," said Sirius. "We can have a council of war then. We have to find Pettigrew."

Remus smiled broadly. It would be like the old League, he thought, all of them planning something together. He knew already how each person would react. Sirius would try to rush off with some half-cocked plan, Jenny encouraging him every step of the way. James would stop him and take charge, Andrea would make the most intelligent suggestions and Lily would be the only person who really grasped what was going on. He paused, his smile fading. That was how it had been more than fourteen years ago. Would they react in the same way now?

"Well then," he said, "I guess we'd better wait till they get back." As he spoke, he was still full of doubt. Was that what he would have said fourteen years ago? He shook his head to clear the thought away. This was ridiculous. He wasn't still fourteen years younger, he was here and now and that was what he had to work with.

"We have to find Pettigrew," Sirius said firmly. Jenny glanced at him, hope in her eyes. Remus gave a slow nod.

"That's what we're here for, after all," he said.

"And then what?" Lily asked slowly. "What will you do with him then?" She looked at the two men with curiosity and concern.

"We have to take him back to our world," said Remus after a pause. Sirius and Jenny were both looking troubled, but neither spoke.

"Yes," said Sirius at last. "Yes, we do."

There was a long silence. Remus had no idea what to think. Andrea was here, and he only wanted to be where she was. Could he not stay in this world for the rest of his life? From the looks on Jenny's and Sirius' faces, they were thinking much the same things.

At last Lily said, "Are you going down to Littlewoods today, Jenny?"

Sirius looked up as Jenny shook her head. "They'll get by fine, there's nothing urgent that needs doing."

"What's Littlewoods?" Sirius asked, looking at her curiously

"My garden," explained Jenny. "I grow various plants used in some of the more exotic spells—mostly for Andrea." She glanced at Remus. "One of the things I grow are the plants she uses in the Wolfsbane Potion. We're working on supplying it to werewolves all over Europe—it's a vast project." Her eyes were animated as she spoke. "We've been working on the project for years, and Andrea's been teaching some other talented potion-makers and Healers to make it." She frowned. "You were—" I mean, you worked on it—." She shook her head in confusion. "Before you died in this world," she said, speaking slowly as if to get things straight in her own mind, "you were helping Andrea and me all the time for this project."

"I see," said Remus. "We—it—we planned it, I think, but—" he trailed off. Andrea had died before they could get anything more than a trial run planned out. He was confused again. He had done things in this world that he hadn't done in the other, he had lived two lives and Andrea only remembered the one he didn't remember. He rested his chin on his hand and looked at the table.

"Tell me," Lily said after a moment, "about Harry. What's he like?" They could hear the longing in her voice as she spoke of her son. Remus looked up again, glad for something he was sure about. He began to tell Lily everything he knew, with Sirius adding more lively notes of description from time to time. Jenny sat listening, seemingly lost in thought.

~

The conversation lasted hours, though it seemed only a short while as they spoke. Sirius thought of Harry, his godson, living with the Muggles. He needed Sirius, needed to be protected from them. The way Lily was watching him made him wish he was back at Hogwarts already to keep an eye on Harry, until he felt Jenny reach out her hand to him under the table.

They heard the clock strike one, and a few minutes later the door to the room opened and Andrea entered alongside James. Both looked tired. Sirius looked at his old friends, worried.

"Did you find Pettigrew, then?" he asked hopefully, standing. Remus also rose, and crossed to Andrea. She embraced him and went to sit down.

"Everything all right?" Remus asked her, and she nodded mutely. She did not look happy, though. "Voldemort?" he asked.

Andrea sighed. "He made an attack on a family in London. They're alive, barely." She allowed Remus to put an arm around her as she sat, and gave him a tired smile.

James nodded. "It's been a nightmare today â€" thanks," he said as Lily passed him a cup of tea. "I'll have to get back soon, it's such a mess. I haven't had much luck with Pettigrew, either, though I've found a lead. He's somewhere in Scotland, not far from Hogwarts. I can give you details if you want to go after himâ€".

"Does the Ministry know it's him?" Jenny asked.

"No." James collapsed into a chair. "Things are bad already, people are running around in a panic over Voldemort, Fudge is trying to tell me how to do my job as usualâ€".

"Cornelius Fudge?" Remus asked, curious.

"Yes, he wanted to be Minister himself, when Dumbledore turned down the job, and he thinks he knows better than me in everything."

"He is Minister, in our world," Sirius said wryly. "A real bumbler." He thought of all the problems he'd had with Fudge in the past.

"That's him, all right. Anyway, no one has time to worry about Pettigrew right now, and they're not even curious about the dark magic we detected yesterday. They're sure that it had something to do with Voldemort."

"No one's after Pettigrew, then?" Remus asked, startled. "You're just letting him run around?"

"What am I supposed to do?" James asked wearily. Sirius noticed just how much grey hair his friend had. "We're not ready for Voldemort to attack again, and we can't spare anyone to look for a man everyone thinks is dead."

"We'll go then, we'll leave immediately," Sirius said, glancing at Remus to make sure his friend agreed. Remus nodded. Sirius was glad that he agreed so quickly.

"Are you sure?" James asked. "Of course, it would help if I didn't have to worry about Pettigrewâ€".

"That's why we came," Sirius said. "Dumbledore told us to get him back. Just tell us where you think Pettigrew is, and we'll be off." He stood up, ready to be off already.

"I assume you want us to stay inconspicuous?" Remus asked.

"Yes," James said, running a hand through his hair. "It would make everything much easier if I didn't have to explain you two to the Ministry."

"Whatever happens, we'll let you know as soon as possible," Sirius promised. He turned to Jenny and opened his mouth to say something, but she spoke first.

"I'm coming with you." She crossed her arms, daring him to disagree.

"Jenny, Pettigrew's very dangerous. You could be killed." It always had been hard to convince Jenny against her will. He'd almost forgotten, over the past few years, but now he remembered very well all the times they had argued.

"I don't care!" she said loudly. She wasn't yelling yet, but there was a dangerous glint in her eyes. "You â€" you'll probably have to leave soon enough. I'm not wasting any time we can have together." She sniffed, trying to hold back tears. "Besides, you'd get yourself killed without me."

Remus looked worriedly at Andrea. She was nodding slowly. "Remus, I can make arrangements for the things in the Halls to run without me for a few days, though not much longer than that. I just have to speak with the Matron, and it'll all be fine. So I'm coming as well."

Remus made no quarrel with this, though Sirius looked at him for support. At last Sirius sighed and turned back to Jenny. What else could he do? And, after all, it wasn't as if he didn't want her company.

"All right," he said. "You can come."

She smiled at him sweetly. "I thought you'd say that."

"I give you any information that we've got," James promised. "You should probably take the train, try to stay inconspicuous."

"All right," Remus said. "We'll do that. Shall we leave at once?"

"Just once I've made arrangements," said Andrea quickly. Sirius nodded.

"As soon as possible," he said. "I don't want that rat to get any more of a jump on us than he already has."

"You can get a train this evening, I think," said James helpfully. "Hang on, there's a timetable somewhere â€"|" He began to rummage through the papers on the dresser. Lily joined him, shaking her head, and produced a small pamphlet from a drawer.

"A night train, a sleeper," she said. "Leaving at six thirty tonight. Will that do?"

"That's great," said Sirius. "When does it get in?"

"Seven tomorrow morning."

"Fine." He looked at Andrea. "Does that give you time to make your arrangements or whatever?"

"Yes, that's perfect." She rose. "I'd better get back, then. I'll meet you all at the station in time for the train."

"Great," said Sirius. "And we'll catch that rat yet."

~

Minerva slept uneasily. A part of her mind was telling her she should be awake. She struggled with herself, her mind caught between sleep and wakefulness. Then she heard a footstep break the silence of her room, and it jolted her awake. Her eyes snapped open and she sat up. Her tail would have swished if she'd had one.

Ginny Weasley was standing by her bed. For a moment, Minerva wondered if she were ill. It was not uncommon for troubled Gryffindors to wake her in the night if there was a problem. _No,_ she told herself, _that's rubbish. Ginny went to study with Chrestomanci. What's she doing here?_

'Professor McGonagall?' Ginny sounded nervous, as well she might. 'I need to speak to you and Professor Dumbledore.'

'In the middle of the night? Ginny, are you mad? What are you doing here anyway?' Minerva swung herself out of bed, shivering a little in her nightdress.

'Chrestomanci sent me,' she said, her voice growing in confidence. She had been learning something, at any rate, while she was away studying to be an enchantress, Minerva thought, even if she hadn't been gone more than a week. Being away from her brothers must be doing her some good.

Minerva realised she hadn't heard whatever it was Ginny had said. 'Pardon?' she asked quickly.

'I said, it's about â€" about You-Know-Who.'

Minerva flinched a little. 'I see. Well, if it won't wait, I suppose I shall have to go and wake him.' She sighed. 'Why did Chrestomanci send you in the middle of the night?'

'It's urgent, and we've only just found out.' Ginny fidgeted a little. 'I need to explain it quickly to both of you.'

Minerva narrowed her eyes at her old student, but Ginny was not quelled. She began to wish she had the old meek Ginny here.

'All right,' she said. 'I'll go and wake him. Come on up to the study.'

Ginny followed Minerva up the stairs to Dumbledore's room. Minerva was very uncertain about the wisdom of this. It was not often that she had been forced to wake Dumbledore in the middle of the night. She scowled a little at Ginny for insisting.

As it turned out, the lights were on in Dumbledore's study.

'He's still up,' said Minerva, feeling a little exasperated. The man never slept, she thought sometimes. She knocked on the door.

'Come in,' called Dumbledore's cheery voice. Minerva opened the door and ushered Ginny in. 'Miss Weasley,' said Dumbledore with a smile. 'This is an unexpected surprise.'

'Chrestomanci sent me,' she said quickly, more nervous around Dumbledore than she had been with Minerva.

'Ah yes?' Dumbledore waved her to a seat. 'May I ask how you got here?'

'Spirit travelling,' answered Ginny absently. 'Or something like it. Chrestomanci says I'm not really spirit travelling the way people with only one life do it, but I'm asleep back at the castle.'

Dumbledore nodded. Minerva frowned. She had heard of spirit travelling, and she didn't really understand it.

'So, what's this important piece of information you have for me?' he asked.

'It's You-Know-Who,' said Ginny, and her voice sounded more nervous. 'He's â€" Chrestomanci just worked out that he's a nine-lived enchanter too.'

Minerva gasped. 'Are you sure?' she asked.

'Chrestomanci is sure,' Ginny said with confidence. 'He sent me to tell you as soon as he found out.'

'Why did he not come himself?' asked Dumbledore.

'He cannot.' She hesitated, and Dumbledore looked at her intently. 'He is â€" not yet fully recovered,' she explained. Minerva had a feeling she was holding something back, but Dumbledore nodded as if she had been perfectly open, and Minerva supposed that he already knew what she had not said. He normally did.

'So,' said Dumbledore. 'I had a suspicion of this. It explains a great deal about Voldemort, including how he moves between the worlds so easily â€" just as you yourself do. Do you know where he is now?'

'He was in our world â€" I mean, the one I've just come from â€" but he left last night. We've traced him to World E.'

Minerva was puzzled, but Dumbledore nodded. 'That is convenient. That's the place where Pettigrew went as well, and I have some â€" some agents there. I suppose Voldemort finds the similarities between this world and E congenial.'

Ginny was nodding as if she understood that, which irritated Minerva because she didn't have a clue about World E.

'What's so special about World E?' she asked of Dumbledore. 'Is that the place Lupin and Black went haring off to last night?'

'Yes. It's twin to this world, there are a great deal more similarities between our world and World E. I would not be surprised if Voldemort has been active there for some time.' He frowned. 'So, all the rats in one trap, eh? Now we have to flush them out.'

'Professor Lupin and Professor Black are there?' asked Ginny in surprise.

'I believe so.' Dumbledore smiled, and at the same time Minerva frowned.

'That's good,' said Ginny. 'You see, the second thing Chrestomanci wanted me to tell you is about You-Know-Who. He's got to come back into this world, because he's causing an â€" some sort of imbalance by spending so much time in other worlds. And until the imbalance is corrected, we're going to keep having â€" problems in our world.' She looked very concerned as she said it. Minerva was surprised that Chrestomanci had inspired such loyalty in the girl already, but then, he had changed her whole life.

'Ah?' said Dumbledore. 'Can you explain that, please?'

'I don't really know very much about it,' said Ginny. 'But Chrestomanci says that until the imbalance is corrected he can't rebuild his garden.' Minerva and Dumbledore both looked puzzled at that. 'The garden is really old, and it's the centre of magic in his world, like Stonehenge here. Chrestomanci can use it to keep control of his world and stop there being any trouble between the Muggles and the wizards.'

'Trouble between Muggles and wizards?' echoed Minerva disbelievingly.

'Yes, all the Muggles there know about magic, and they don't really like it. One of Chrestomanci's jobsâ€" she sounded as if she were repeating something she'd learned by rote 'â€" is to protect non-magical people from being harmed by wizards. And he can't do that if he can't control it.'

'This is all very interesting,' said Minerva, 'but what does it have to do with You-Know-Who?'

'Well, until he's back here, Chrestomanci can't do anything, really.' Ginny sighed, sounding older than her years. Minerva thought it was madness to try to get Voldemort back here when he'd just vanished. But she could see that it had to be done.

'Do you have any suggestions as to how exactly we can do this?' asked Dumbledore, watching Ginny with his piercing blue eyes.

'Chrestomanci said that You-Know-Who has to follow Peter Pettigrew,' said Ginny slowly. 'He said that You-Know-Who put one of his lives in Pettigrew, and if Pettigrew is killed, then he'll lose a life. So if you can get Pettigrew back, You-Know-Who will have to come here too.'

'I see,' said Dumbledore. 'We'll do our best. The trouble is going to be getting the information to Remus and Sirius.' He looked at Ginny. 'Any bright ideas?'

'They're in World E?' she asked. Minerva was wondering about the propriety of the greatest wizard in the world asking a fourth year student for advice. But Ginny wasn't a fourth year student, she was an enchantress studying in another world.

'Yes, that's correct,' said Dumbledore patiently.

'Well â€¦ I suppose I could go there as well and explain.' She hesitated. 'How did they get there, anyhow? Are they spirit travelling? If they are, all you have to do is call them back and explain.'

'No,' said Dumbledore. 'I'm not sure how they got to wherever they are, but they're not spirit travelling.' He frowned. 'They seem to have transported themselves bodily into the other world.'

Ginny looked worried. 'Oh, that's really dangerous,' she said. 'Chrestomanci says there are three ways to go between worlds. One is like I'm doing, leaving most of my lives behind and taking one through to this world. The second is to spirit travel, so that you're half in one world and half in the other. And the third is to go there bodily, so that you leave nothing behind. If you do that there's a serious risk of being killed. And it won't work unless you have ties of love in the world you're going to â€" or you use Dark Magic, I suppose.'

'I see,' said Minerva. 'How will they get back?'

'That's much more straightforward,' said Ginny. 'It's relatively easy to get back to one's own world. They'll be drawn here.'

'Yes,' said Dumbledore. 'I believe all that is correct. So, will you be able to go to them and explain the situation? I don't see how we can do it otherwise.'

'I'll have to ask Chrestomanci,' said Ginny, 'but I reckon he'll say yes.'

'Good.' Dumbledore rose. 'Very well then, I'll assume you'll be able to do this. If there's more trouble, you'll have to return here, I suppose.'

'It should be fine,' said Ginny, and again Minerva was surprised by her self-possession. 'I'd better go now.'

'Thank you for your help,' said Dumbledore, as if she were a witch from another organisation who had come to offer her assistance, which, Minerva reflected, she was. They both ushered Ginny to the door, and she walked away.

'Well,' said Minerva when she had gone, 'she's changed quite a bit.'

'Amazing what a new environment and being away from family ties will

do to a person,' said Dumbledore absently. 'I suppose we just have to wait now. It is disturbing to learn that Voldemort has nine lives. How many does he have left, do you think?'

Minerva hesitated. 'Well, I don't really know. There's the one in Pettigrew, and I suppose he lost one when Harry defeated him, and probably one four years ago with Quirrell â€" that makes six left.'

'He must have put one in that diary he trapped Ginny with,' Dumbledore added. 'Five. Possibly he's lost others, but we won't know about them for certain. I'll have a look in the records later.' He yawned. 'Well, I think I shall sleep on this, and perhaps you should as well, Minerva.'

'Yes.' Minerva glanced at the clock, but she had not learned to tell time with Dumbledore's clocks, and all she knew was that Jupiter had risen and Venus had set. 'I'll think about this,' she said. 'Good night.'

'Good night.'

Minerva went out quietly and walked through the silent corridors to her bedroom. Sleep was a long time in coming to her, and when it did it was haunted by five Voldemorts chasing her through the corridors of a strange castle. She got more and more lost, and finally was caught in a dead end. She woke shivering and sweating, and did not sleep again that night.

****Disclaimer same as previous parts: The stuff that's not from HP is either Katie Bell's or Blaise's. Reviews are loved and appreciated.****

4. The Chase

> <meta name="ProgId"> Out of this World â€" Part 4

****_Out of this World â€" Part 4_****_****

The train to Hogsmeade wasn't very crowded. The conductor showed them to a large and comfortable compartment. Remus thought how much nicer it was than the Muggle trains he had travelled on in Europe. This compartment was much larger than those, big enough to walk around, and with a proper table in the centre and four bunks along the walls. It seemed wider than was possible given the width of the train, but Remus didn't worry about that. Magical transport was often like that, and with good reason. He shoved his suitcase on the rack and sat on one of the bunks.

Looking at Andrea as she took a seat opposite, he thought he wouldn't care at all if the compartment had been smaller than the crowded third-class one on the train in Albania.

They rode north as the sun sank below the horizon, talking of their plans and of the information James had provided them, eating the supper that magically was served at their table.

When it began to get dark, Jenny and Andrea went off to explore the train and look for the washroom, leaving Remus and Sirius gazing out

into the night.

"It's rather nice here," Remus said quietly. He glanced at Sirius, trying to decide what his friend was thinking. "I could get to like it here."

"So could I," Sirius said. He stared at the table, as if trying to read the patterns in the wood. "So could I."

"I'm sure â€" James is Minister, after allâ€"|" Remus trailed off.

"You think he'd let us stay?" Sirius challenged him.

"You think he wouldn't?"

"I'm sure he would. I just don't know if we should."

"Don't you want to?"

"I want to. I want to, Remus." Sirius sighed and shook his head. "There haven't been many things in this life I've wanted more. I'm sure it's the same for you."

"A thousand reasons to stay." Remus smiled. "Most of them are Andrea."

"It would be so easy to stay, wouldn't it?" Sirius glanced at the small suitcase that lay half-open on Jenny's bunk. "So easy."

"Stay here, settle down, marry â€" " Remus hesitated. "Marry Andrea, like I want to."

"Yes."

"If I did, I'd never have to worry about full moons again." Remus glanced over his shoulder instinctively, though there was nobody else in the compartment. "Wouldn't have to try to get Snape to make my potion, and worry that some month, he'd lose it and poison me. Just another reasonâ€"|"

"It is rather tempting, the idea of a place where no one even wonders whether I might not have worked for Voldemort." Sirius took a drink and half-smiled. "Not many downsides to this place."

"Except," Remus said after a moment, "what we both feel, I think."

"Yes," Sirius said slowly. "Yes."

"We don't belong here, do we?" Remus looked around the train compartment and out at the lights of towns rushing past the window. "No matter how hard we'd like to think so, this isn't where we belong."

"I know." Sirius sighed. "And at home â€" wellâ€"|" Dumbledore's going to need us, I'm sure, when Voldemort comes back. He's not young, and Harry â€" Harry's so young. We can't leave them to face Voldemort."

"No," Remus said. "And Harry's another thing. We can't just leave him."

"I know, I'm his guardian, and he needs me. When we were talking to Lily, I realised that I do have to go back and take care of him there. There's no way he can come here. And I am supposed to be teachingâ€|"

"But that doesn't make it easy."

"No. If I could, I'd say forget it and stay here. I'm sure I could be happy."

"I know I could be." Remus sighed. "But we both knowâ€|"

"Yes." Sirius stared once more off towards Jenny's bunk. "Don't say anything to Jenny about this," he said, sighing. "Just maybe we can figure something else outâ€| but if not, I'll tell her myself."

"Yes," Remus agreed. _How will I ever tell Andrea goodbye? How can I do that?_

The door to the compartment opened. Jenny and Andrea came in, still laughing at something one of them had said. Sirius seemed to snap out of his pensive mood at once.

"What's so funny?" he asked. "Got slime in my hair, have I? Like Snape?"

"Like who?" Both Jenny and Andrea looked puzzled for a moment. Remus opened his mouth and shut it again, a suspicion in his mind.

"Severus Snape the slimeball Slytherin," chuckled Sirius.

Andrea gasped. "Severus has been dead for fifteen years," she said quietly. "He's one of the great heroes of the last time Voldemort invaded." She crossed the room to sit by Remus. "He's â€" alive? In your world, I mean."

"Yes," said Remus soberly. "Very much so." How strange, he was thinking. There are more and more differences.

"He's alive and he's the most arrogant, know-it-all greaseball you can imagine," said Sirius, speaking with great force.

Jenny looked at him sorrowfully. "Well, I suppose you weren't to know. He saved our lives. I know you didn't like him when you were students, but â€" well, you know he had a crush on Lily?" Sirius and Remus both nodded, Sirius grinning a little. "Well, we were all working for the League together on something, and Voldemort got wind of what we were doing and tried to kill us. If it hadn't been for Snape, he's have succeeded. Poor Lily, she felt awful, because he did it to save her."

Remus caught his breath, tightening his arm around Andrea where she sat. The thought that she owed her life to Snape was hard to accept. Sirius looked a little bit abashed as well. The silence was a little bit awkward. Remus was thinking about the many things he didn't know

about Andrea's life, the things he'd never know.

"Well, if we're going to spend tomorrow hunting Wormtail we'd better get some sleep," said Andrea after a moment. She climbed up to her bunk above Remus' and began to get changed. The others followed suit and soon were all stretched out on the bunks. Remus listened to the rumble of the wheels and tried not to think about the fourteen years until he fell asleep.

~

"Remus, wake up." Andrea's soft voice penetrated into Remus' uneasy sleep, and he opened his eyes. The compartment was dark, but he could feel Andrea's hand on his shoulder.

"What is it?" he asked drowsily. "It's the middle of the night, love, go back to sleep."

"Wake up," she repeated. "There's a girl here to talk to us." Remus yawned and sat up, stretching out his arms and brushing his hair out of his face. As he looked around, he could see the shapes of Sirius and Jenny getting out of their beds, and also another shape in the middle of the room. He began to get up and struck his head on the bottom of the bunk above him.

"Hang on, I'll put a light on," said Andrea. A moment later the compartment was bathed in light. Remus blinked rapidly, rubbing his head. He looked at the girl. It was Ginny Weasley.

"Hi, Professor Lupin," she said, smiling at him. She seemed wide awake, and she glanced at Sirius, and then with some curiosity at the two women. Remus crossed the room to her, completely confused.

"What are you doing here, Ginny? How did you get onto the train?" he asked.

"Well," began Ginny, "there are some things I have to tell youâ€¦"

~

"So, what do we do now?" Remus looked at Sirius, sitting around the table in the swaying train compartment, early in the morning. He was dressed but looked tired. "I still don't really believe it, little Ginny Weasley an enchantress. She seemed much older."

"Well," began Sirius, "I think we do what she suggested. Use Pettigrew to lure Voldemort back to our world."

"It's so odd," said Jenny slowly. "I mean, there is no Ginny Weasley here. I know Molly and Arthur, and they've got six sons."

Andrea looked sombre. "They wanted a daughter," she murmured, "but Molly was ill, and she miscarried."

Silence fell again, only broken by the train's rattle and the sounds of the four eating breakfast.

"I didn't think that rat could get any worse," muttered Sirius. "But

he let Voldemort put a life in him. I don't get this nine-life stuff at all. How can Voldemort just stick a life into someone else?"

"You probably have to be an enchanter yourself to know the answer to that," said Jenny. "Why didn't you ask that girl, if you're so curious?"

Sirius shuffled a little and said nothing, and both Remus and Jenny grinned, knowing the answer to that question. Sirius would hate to have to ask one of his former students for explanations like that.

"If Voldemort's a nine-lived enchanter," began Remus thoughtfully after another pause, "then how come he can be in your world and the one we've come from at the same time? I mean, I suppose it's quite a good thing, really, it means that there's only one of him in the Related Worlds."

"Oh," said Andrea, "that's straightforward enough. He isn't here all the time, in fact, he's only been here twice before that I know of. Once quite a long time ago, when I was still at school, he was here for about two years, and then he vanished. The second time was when he â€" he killed you." Remus flinched a little from her words.

"How long was he here for then?" asked Sirius between mouthfuls of toast.

"Four years. They're called the Dark Years in history books now." Andrea smiled a little. "Anyway, I suppose he just moved between the worlds when he felt like it. It would be easy enough, if he can get into other worlds the way Ginny did."

"I suppose so." Remus looked troubled. "I wonder how many worlds he's attacked."

The train gave a whistle and they pulled into Hogsmeade Station.

Sirius got up and swallowed his toast. "Well, we'll just have to get him out of this one," he said in a determined tone. "Let's hunt for Wormtail."

**Thanks for reading â€" Part Five, the end of this story, is already up. **

** B & KB**

5. The End?

> <meta name="ProgId"> The next day, they continued north to the village where the Ministry information indicated Pettigrew might be hiding

Out of this World â€" part 5

The last part. Very long and knotty.

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They did not stay long at Hogsmeade. The information James had given them indicated that Pettigrew had been traced to a village about twenty miles north of there, and so they set out at once. Jenny had suggested visiting Hogwarts, but Sirius and Remus had both thought this was a bad idea. Privately, Remus had told Andrea that he didn't want to see what Hogwarts looked like here. Andrea understood that well. She had asked Remus a little about the Halls of Healing in his world, and the very thought of the place that was so dear to her being full of strange and unexpected faces made her shiver.

It would have been easier to Apparate, Andrea thought as they rode the bumpy Muggle bus northwards, but if they had Apparated there would have been no chance of picking up Pettigrew's trail as they travelled. At least they had all Charmed their luggage to make it even smaller and lighter. Andrea's own bag was no larger than a small purse, but it held a great many more things than anyone would have thought possible.

The bus took them to a very small village, little more than a single street lined with houses, a shop and a pub and a village green.

"What now?" asked Jenny, looking at the quiet street and the one shop.

"I think we should ask in the shop," said Remus. "I don't think the pub'll be open at this hour." He walked towards it. The others followed him in.

The young woman behind the counter didn't know anything about a man who answered Pettigrew's description "Remus gave it, because Sirius kept trying to interject adjectives about Pettigrew's ancestry, character, and habits" but she called her father in, and he seemed to have information. Getting it from him was like pulling teeth from a bad-tempered horse.

"So," Remus pressed the Muggle for answers, "You say you saw a man that sounds like the one we're looking for?"

"Aye," the shopkeeper answered. "He was in here yesterday for some food and a paper. A friend of yours, is he?" He eyed the foursome warily.

"An old friend," Sirius said, trying not to show his hatred for Pettigrew. "We've been looking for him for some time. Do you have any idea where he might be?"

"Now that I canna tell ye," the man said casually. "He'll no be staying here, I know that, but there's no telling where he'll have gone."

"He's a bit " odd," Jenny added. "He " well, it's very sad. But we should find him, we really must" it's for his own good."

"Aye," said the man again, not sounding in the least bit perturbed. "We've had others like that here. Strange ones, they are."

"Quite delusional," Andrea added, in her best professional manner. In her habitual white dress, she looked the picture of a Muggle nurse. "It's nothing dangerous to others â€| but, you see, we'd best find him before anything happensâ€|"

"Aye. If ye want tae find him, I'd reckon you'd best look in the forest. It's no very far, an' if he's hiding anywhere in this area, that's where he'll be."

Jenny smiled at him. "Thank you for your help."

"Mind you," he continued, "it's no a nice place, the forest. Ye shouldn't take the ladies there, if you don't mind my saying so." He gave Remus and Sirius stern glances. "There's no lack of good rooms in the Bull, they'll do very well there."

"Thank you for your offer," said Andrea, trying not to sound irritated. "But I think we can take care of ourselves." They walked out of the shop, and Andrea could feel the man's eyes on her back.

"So," said Sirius when they were out on the street. "The forest. I suppose he means the forest up there?" He waved a hand to the hills beyond the village.

"Do you see any other forests around here?" asked Jenny tartly. "Not that it's not big enough to be ten forests," she muttered under her breath. "It'll take weeks to find him in there." Remus and Sirius exchanged glances.

"Will you be able to find him there?" asked Remus quietly.

"I'll find him." Sirius spoke with assurance. "We should have something to eat, and then we'll go off this afternoon."

"This afternoon?" demanded Jenny. "You'll never have him by nightfall, it gets dark early now, and you do not want to be in that forest at night, believe me."

"I'm not wasting any time," said Sirius stubbornly.

In a placating tone, Remus added, "We'll be fine, Jenny."

"And how are you going to see him if it's dark, idiot?" asked Jenny, ignoring Remus.

A grin crossed Sirius' face. "I'm sure I'll find a way."

Andrea listened to the interchange, wondering what they were talking about for a few moments before she tumbled to the solution. From the look on Jenny's face, she had also realised what Sirius had in mind.

"See, this is where it's very good that you have me, not James, along," said Sirius, grinning. "Dogs are great at finding people, while deer just don't cut it."

"Oh," Jenny grinned back. "I'd forgotten."

"Am I still an idiot?" Sirius asked innocently.

"Of course," she said sweetly. "But that's all right, I forgive you."

"Well, if you two have sorted that out, shall we go have lunch in the Bull?" said Remus practically. "Then we can go off into the forest and start looking."

~

Darkness was falling in the forest. Outside, Andrea thought, it would still be fairly light, but here under the shadow of the trees, it was as good as night already. She tried not to shiver. Beside her, Jenny was rubbing the ears of a large black dog. Andrea smiled in recognition of the scene, and for a moment her mind changed the details so that it was herself stroking a massive grey wolf instead.

"We'd better keep moving," said Remus. He caught Andrea's eye, and she knew they were sharing the same thought. "Have you got the scent?" he asked the dog. Padfoot quested around the area for a moment, and then bounded a few steps ahead, nose to the ground. Andrea raised her wand to give enough light so that she would not walk into anything. Remus and Jenny followed suit.

Padfoot had followed the scent Pettigrew had left from the edge of the village where he had been able to transform into a dog in safety to here in the forest. Andrea looked ahead, wondering where the search would lead them now.

"Don't get too far ahead," warned Remus as Padfoot bounded on. "You're all but invisible in the dark anyway." The dog turned his head so that pale eyes shone in the wandlight, waiting for them to catch up.

Then they were off again, picking a path through the thick undergrowth. It had rained recently, and the ground was damp, so their feet made very few noises. Other than the occasional snapping twig and the dull quiet thud of feet, there was no sound. The night was still and quiet, perfect for tracking.

Andrea looked ahead again, and saw a glint of light through the trees.

"What's that?" she asked. Remus and Jenny both looked downhill as well.

"I don't know," said Jenny, and Remus shook his head. He frowned. Padfoot had not stopped, and he was leading them towards the light. It seemed to be shining from the ground, completely puzzling Andrea.

She strained her ears and heard a soft bubbling sound. At the same time, Remus gave a nod.

"Water," he said quietly. "A stream, or a river or something. That's

the moonlight reflecting off it that you see."

Padfoot was leading them directly towards it. The ground became soft and muddy beneath their feet. He stopped on the bank and sniffed around uncertainly in several directions.

"Which way did he go?" asked Remus. "Did he cross?"

Padfoot hesitated. Then he gave a flicker, and Sirius was on his hands and knees on the muddy ground. He paused for a second, and Remus waited. Then he straightened up. In a hoarse voice, he said, "I don't know which way he went."

"Across, probably," said Jenny. She clambered down the bank to the water's edge. "It's shallow enough to wade," she said, taking off her boots. "Cold, though," she added as she stepped into the water.

"You don't have any sense, do you?" said Sirius. "Why don't you Apparate?"

"I've got enough to worry about without tiring myself out now," she retorted. "And so have you." Andrea nodded agreement. Apparating was tiring, even for strong wizards, so it was not used often as a means of transport. It would be silly to use it to cross this stream. She climbed down the bank as well, undid her boots and carefully pulled her skirts high enough to keep them dry. The water was more than cold, it was icy, but that was no surprise in November in Scotland. It was a wonder it wasn't raining.

Remus and Sirius followed her across the river. She climbed out on the other side, and dried her feet with a wave of her wand. Jenny was already looking around as if expecting to see Pettigrew appear from behind every bush.

"Do you think he went this way?" asked Remus of Sirius, who was looking around with his sharp eyes.

"I don't know." There was another flicker and Sirius transformed. Remus, Andrea and Jenny stood quite still, watching as the huge black dog hunted around the ground, along the banks of the river. He did not take off on a scent, however, but moved back and forth, trying various directions without much success. Andrea and Remus watched him, whilst Jenny climbed down to the bank again and began looking around in the mud.

"What are you doing?" asked Andrea.

Jenny only muttered something under her breath. Her wand shone onto the ground very brightly. Andrea looked back at Padfoot. He was transforming back, looking thoroughly fed up. As before, his voice took a while to return properly, but in tones that were half growl, half bark, he said, "I can't find him anywhere. Either he's gone up the stream in the water or he Disapparated or something."

"Peter can't Disapparate," said Remus automatically. "Or at least, he couldn't when I knew him last."

"No, no, that's not what he's done," said Jenny sharply. "Come down here and look at this."

"What?" said Andrea and Remus simultaneously.

"Look at this. No wonder you couldn't smell Pettigrew."

The other three climbed down to join Jenny on the bank. She was pointing to some small trails, almost imperceptible in the mud.

"Wormtail," growled Sirius. "Of course. No wonder I couldn't smell Pettigrew. I was looking for the wrong thing. So, he's transformed?"

"Finding a rat in the forest is going to be harder." Andrea looked concerned. "Will we be able to get him? What if there are lots of rats?"

In answer, Sirius transformed back again on the riverbank. He put his nose to the tracks ground, his paws sinking into the mud, and growled softly. Then he was up the bank in a single leap, so that the other three had to scramble after him.

He followed the trail quickly through the undergrowth, along the top of the riverbank going upstream.

"Wonder where we're going now," Andrea muttered under her breath. "D'you think we're going to be following him all night?"

"Could be," Remus answered. "So long as we catch him, I don't care, really." Jenny nodded her assent. For a while they walked in silence, trying to keep up with the sure-footed and swift black dog.

The banks of the stream grew steeper and steeper, and still they followed along the edge, uphill. Andrea cast a worried glance into the rocky depths. One misstepâ€

Suddenly they stopped. Padfoot was growling, low and menacing, on the very edge of the bank â€" it was almost a cliff, Andrea thought. He looked down, and Remus went to join him. Her heart in her mouth, Andrea followed.

There was a hole in the side of the cliff, yawning open like a mouth, the rocks around it as teeth.

"In there?" asked Remus, his voice scarcely above a whisper. There was another flicker, and Sirius was kneeling with half his body over the edge. Jenny snatched at him and hauled him back.

"Idiot," she muttered, her face pale. "Transforming on a cliff-edge." Sirius broke away from her arm, a grin on his face.

"I was perfectly safe." He went back to the brink. "He's in there," he murmured. Andrea's hand tightened around her wand. Voldemort's supporter, a man who had one of the enchanter's nine lives within him. She found herself wondering if you could save a person hurt beyond all healing like that; by taking a life from a nine-lived enchanter and giving it to the dying one. Well, she wasn't going to get a chance to try.

Remus sat on the edge with legs dangling down, looking at the cliff consideringly.

"Andrea, Jenny, you two stay up here and watch for trouble. Put something around the mouth of the cave so he can't get out even as a rat." He looked up at Sirius. "Let's go."

Without another word, the two of them began to climb down. Jenny was about to protest, Andrea was sure, but she gripped the other woman's arm.

"Keep quiet. We don't want to disturb him any more than necessary." They both watched the two men slip down over the rocks and stand in the mouth of the cave. When they were in, Andrea raised her wand. With Jenny, she set magical wards all around the hole which would prevent anyone from passing through.

Tense, they stood waiting. It seemed to take forever, a thousand years for every second that passed. Andrea caught Jenny's eye.

"D'you think they're all right?"

"Of course they'll be fine," said Jenny, sounding only half convinced despite her words.

There was a dull thud which echoed off the water, and some grunts. Andrea watched intently, scarcely breathing. Then the crack of a spell " she did not know who had cast it, and a flash of bright light that left red and blue afterimages all over her vision.

"What will we do if " if it doesn't work?" she asked. Jenny shook her head and took a deep breath.

There was a scream. Then silence. Andrea shivered.

"If they don't come out in a minute, I'm going down there," Jenny proclaimed.

There was another long pause. A shout came out from the cave, echoing around and around so that it was incomprehensible to either woman.

Jenny sat down on the edge and swung her legs down, groping for a foothold. Andrea gripped her shoulder.

"Wait!"

The shout came again, and this time they could hear the words.

"We've got him!"

Then there was a light at the mouth of the cave, and both women leaned over the edge to see who was there.

"You can lift the spell now, Jenny," called Sirius. With a wave of her wand, Jenny cancelled the spell and watched. Sirius then spoke a levitation spell that raised both Remus and the third figure present up onto the edge of the cliff.

Andrea turned to stare. It was Peter Pettigrew, looking far the worse for the fourteen years it had been since she'd last seen him. He'd lost most of his hair, and most of his weight as well. There was a hunted look about him, and he was shaking. He was bound in heavy chains, and Remus held his wand pointed directly at him, a hard expression on his face.

"Don't you think that's a little overboard?" Jenny asked, glancing at the irons on his wrists and ankles.

"We enchanted them specially," Remus explained. "He can't transform while he's wearing them."

Sirius clambered up the cliff and also pointed his wand at Pettigrew.

"Well, now what?" asked Andrea after a moment. "I suppose you've got to take him back to his world." She gave both men piercing looks. "How do you propose to do that?"

"I don't know." Remus looked tired as he spoke. "I really haven't got a clue." Casting a glance at the sky, Andrea saw that the moon had almost set. It must be very late.

Jenny was glaring at Sirius and Remus.

"You can't bounce back to your world like that without even saying goodbye to James and Lily."

"Wouldn't have done that anyway, Jenny love," said Sirius, stifling a yawn. "Let's go back to their house."

"Apparate, you mean?" said Remus, and she nodded. "We can't turn up at James and Lily's in the middle of the night. Isn't there a better place?"

"Come to my house, it's just down the road from theirs," suggested Jenny.

"What about him?" Everyone knew whom Andrea meant.

"He'll come attached to me," said Sirius with an angry note in his voice. "He's got a spell on him so he can't speak or hear what we're saying, if you were wondering."

Andrea nodded understandingly.

"Well then, let's go," said Jenny. "Know where you're going?" Everyone nodded. She raised her wand, and Sirius put a heavy hand on Pettigrew's shoulder. "Three â€¦ two â€¦ one â€¦ go!"

A minute later, they stood on the porch of a nice house on a dark quiet street. Jenny fumbled in her pocket for a key, gave up, and unlocked the door with a simple spell. Pettigrew didn't want to move, so Sirius kicked him, hard, and the little man stumbled into the room. He looked as if he wanted to say something, but he was gagged and couldn't. Jenny looked at him disdainfully.

"Just put him in there," she said, gesturing vaguely. "You can leave

him on the floor, he won't be able to do anything." Sirius guided Pettigrew with a few more well-placed kicks.

"Do you want me to help you make up the beds?" Andrea asked, and Jenny nodded.

"We'll be right back. You two sit down and make yourselves at home," she said to Sirius and Remus, who both looked exhausted. The women hurried upstairs.

"I'm glad they caught Pettigrew," Andrea said as they made up the first bed, "But you know what this meansâ€¦".

"I'm trying not to think about it," Jenny admitted. "Maybe they won't have to go back. Or maybe we could go with them. Or something."

"We can't do that, you know that." Andrea plucked at a sheet distractedly, looking Jenny in the eye. "I can't just abandon the Halls like that, or the Wolfsbane Project. I have a duty to people here, Jenny, I have to stay. And you know you can't go either."

"Well, why not?" Jenny asked stubbornly, knowing the answer. "So it's illegal to travel between worlds like that. So we'd be out of place, and everyone will think we've been dead fifteen years. So what?" She threw a pillow onto the bed.

"So you know very well that we can't," Andrea said miserably, leading the way to the next room. "I want to find a way as much as you do, Jenny, but I just don't see one." She sat down on the edge of the bed. "I can't believe I've just found my Remus again, only to send him away."

"I'm not giving up yet," Jenny said, determinedly. "They can stay here. James will let them."

"Do they want to?" Andrea asked sadly. "Do you think they do?"

"Of course they do. They said they did." Jenny looked at her friend across the bed. "What on earth do you mean?"

"I don't really know," Andrea confessed. "I'm feeling very confused right now. I love Remus so much â€œ"

"I know how that feels," Jenny said dryly, pulling down the window-shade.

"I want what's best for him," Andrea said slowly. "And I don't know what that is."

"Andrea, you love him, and he loves you. What could be better for him than staying here and marrying you, if you can't go back with him?" Jenny looked puzzled. "I don't understand at all."

"Neither do I, Jenny. Neither do I." Andrea sighed as they finished the final room. "I wish I did, but I don't." The women went downstairs together slowly.

"Shall I get something to eat?" asked Jenny of the two men sitting silently together.

"No, I'm knackered," said Sirius. "I'll sleep on the floor if you haven't got enough beds."

"Don't be silly. Well, come on then."

"We'd better watch that," growled Sirius, glancing at Pettigrew, who was cowering on the floor.

"I'm not tired," Andrea lied. "I'll watch him."

Remus gave her a sharp glance. "Wake me up in a few hours and I'll take over from you," he said. "You can't sit up for the rest of the night."

"Thanks."

As the other three went upstairs, Andrea settled herself on the least comfortable chair so that she would not drowse off, and opened the window a little to let the air in. She wondered what she should do. She knew it was impossible for her to leave this place, she had too many ties, too many duties to fulfil. Could Remus stay? She knew he also had his ties to his own world. But there must be a way. There must be.

~

"So, you have him there?" Dumbledore did not sound at all surprised as he spoke through the mirror. It had taken Sirius, Lily and James the best part of the morning to manage to connect the mirror with another world, and they knew the spell would not hold for long. But it would stay for long enough. "Marvellous," continued Dumbledore. "All you need to do now is bring him here."

"Yes," Remus agreed. "How?"

"How did you get there?" Dumbledore asked.

"I'm not really sure."

"You're the one who did the spell," put in Sirius. "Surely you have some idea."

"I can remember the spell if that's what you mean. But it won't do any good. It's a spell for getting out of your own world, not for going back." Remus stared at the ceiling for a moment, lost in thought. "And it was Halloween," he added. "That made it easier."

"Well," said Dumbledore through the mirror, "Ginny said that getting back to one's own world is easier still. There's a spell here â€" he rummaged through a pile of papers on his desk "â€" which I thought you could use." Remus and Sirius both listened intently as he read out the instructions and words, and Remus repeated it under his breath.

"Okay, we'll try that," he said.

"Marvellous," repeated Dumbledore. "And we'll make preparations at this end to take Pettigrew to Azkaban. There will be a trial there, I

dare say." His image in the mirror flickered, and Lily hastened to strengthen the spell. Dumbledore stared at her with unabashed curiosity, but said nothing. "I think that's all," he said after a moment. "I'll expect you later today, then."

"All right," said Sirius slowly. Lily broke off the connection after they'd all said their farewells to Dumbledore. Nobody spoke for a while.

"So," said James after a moment, "you're going back today." His words were heavy. Remus and Sirius both nodded without looking at anyone. Jenny turned away abruptly and marched out of the room. A look of concern flashed across Sirius' face.

"If you'll excuse me!" He hurried after her and went into the sitting room where she was staring fixedly out of the window.

"Jenny, I think we'd better talk about this." She did not turn. "Come and sit down?"

After a moment she looked over her shoulder at him as he stood by the sofa. He could not read the expression in her eyes. Then, moving slowly, she went over and sat on the sofa. Sirius sat beside her and put his arm around her.

"Sirius," she said, slowly, "Why? Why do you have to leave me?"

Part of him wanted to put this conversation off, to kiss her and tell her later. But he couldn't. He owed the truth to her, and now, and no trying to hide it.

"Remus and I have been talking about it," Sirius said quietly. "And we both know we have to go back."

"But why?" Jenny asked him, tears in her eyes. "Why won't you stay with me? Don't you love me anymore?"

"Of course I love you, Jenny. But we have to go back because we belong there, and we don't belong here."

"But, Sirius," she said, taking his hand. "Stay here with me. I love you, I want you to stay with me."

"And I want to stay with you, too," he said, and felt his heart would break. "I'd give anything to stay here. But I can't. Voldemort isn't dead in my world, either, and I have to help fight him once we get him back there, that is. And Harry needs me there, and so does Dumbledore."

"Take me with you, then," she begged. "Please, Sirius. I'll leave, I'll go with you. I know it's illegal but I don't care."

"I wish you could," he said, taking her in his arms tightly. "Oh, I wish we could be together. But Jenny, you know we can't. When you're really honest with yourself you know the truth."

She pulled out of his arms. "I wish I'd never met you, Sirius Black!" she yelled. Her hair was tangled across her face and tears still

flowed from her eyes. "It wasn't enough for you to break my heart once, you have to do it again! I hope â€" I hope Voldemort does kill you, when you get back. You deserve it, getting my hopes up like that and then just saying, 'Sorry, dear, I have to go back, I'm sure you understand'! I hate you!" In a blind fury, she picked up a nearby book and threw it at his head. He dodged, and it hit the wall. She ran from the room, crying. Sirius hesitated, then hurried after her, following her upstairs and into her bedroom.

She was lying across the bed, sobbing her heart out. Sirius crossed the room slowly and sat down, nervous. She didn't look at him. After a moment, he put a hand on her shoulder.

"Go away," she ground out. He didn't. After another moment, she turned her face toward him, leaning on her elbows. "I said, go away. Why don't you just leave now? Let me get back to my own life."

"I am so sorry, Jenny," he said quietly. "I never wanted to cause you this kind of pain. I love you."

"That's the problem, isn't it?" she said bitterly. "You love me, and no matter how much I hate it, I love you too. I have for so many years, I can't remember when I didn't love you. Why, I don't know, but I did, and I do, and I always will."

"And I'll always love you." He looked at her for a moment, considered what to say. "I can't give you any false promises, Jenny, but â€" well, I can promise you this, that I will never love another woman, and that if, someday, I can come to be with you, I'll come in a flash."

"Not very comforting," she said softly. "But I've never loved anyone else, Sirius, not in all the years you've been gone, and I know I never will. And â€" and no matter what I say, Sirius, if there is a way, and you can come back â€" oh, Siriusâ€"|"

He pulled her to him and kissed her passionately. For a time, nothing seemed to matter.

~

"Will Voldemort really follow Wormtail back?" asked James in confusion and hope as the others sat around the kitchen table sipping tea. In a corner, Pettigrew stood, still bound in the chains that prevented him from transforming or working magic.

"Ginny Weasley said he would," Remus answered. "She said he'd put one of his lives into Peter."

"One of his lives?" echoed Lily. "How many lives does he have?" Her tone was incredulous.

"Nine," Remus explained steadily. "Or at least, he had nine. I don't know how many he has now. But that's why he's such a powerful wizard, because he has nine lives." Lily was shaking her head in disbelief, and James only looked slightly more understanding.

"If you say soâ€"|" She looked at the small man in the corner wonderingly. "You'd never think it, would you, looking at him?" Andrea smiled agreement. Remus was scribbling notes on a piece of

paper he had conjured up.

"What's that?" asked Andrea after a moment.

"The spell to get back. I don't want to forget it." He sighed heavily.

"Moony," James began, and then hesitated. "Are you sure you can't stay here? I know it's â€" not quite legal, but I could make some arrangementsâ€"|"

"I've got to go back," Remus said. "I â€" you must understand, James, there are things I have to do there, responsibilities and people â€" Harryâ€"|" He stammered a little. Andrea's eyes never left his face, but he did not look directly at her. Lily had flinched at his mention of Harry, but was now watching Andrea alertly. Remus raised his eyes to Andrea. "Will you â€" will you come with me?" he asked.

Lily caught James' eye and silently stood up. James took a second to realise what she was doing, and then he caught Pettigrew by the chain and dragged him out of the room after them.

Andrea scarcely noticed them go. Her eyes were filling already, and she blinked furiously for a moment, standing up as well.

"Remus," she began, "I can't come back with you." She knew that with bad news, it was best not to hem and haw, long years of practice had taught her exactly the correct tone and manner to take. But her professionalism was cracking at the edges even as she spoke.

"I â€" I thought you'd say that." He stood facing her in the kitchen, his eyes full of pain. "And I can't stay here."

Andrea wanted to beg him, plead with him to stay, but she understood his reasons too well. They were the same as hers, after all. She knew she didn't have to explain, but she did anyway, to fill the silence.

"I have to keep working in the Halls, I'm needed there, and my friends are there. I can't leave them, nor my patients. And Jenny and I have to keep going on the Wolfsbane Project, there's nobody else who can do it, even if they would." Her voice faltered. "I want to stay with you more than â€" more than anything else in the world, but I can't."

"My love, I understand." Remus reached out to her suddenly, and she wrapped her arms around him, not sure whether she was comforting him or he was consoling her. "It's the right thing to do."

Andrea knew that. And she knew that there was nothing she would love more in the world than to stand here and never let Remus go again.

"I've only just found you," he murmured, "and now I have to let you go again." His voice was low, his face close to hers. "At least I can say goodbye this time."

She didn't answer. There was nothing to say. Instead she held him closer and closer, till she could scarcely breathe. At length he backed away a little and looked her in the face.

"Andrea, if you â€" if you should meet someone else, don't deny yourself anything for my sake." Remus pressed her arm tightly. "I'd far rather you were happy."

"If you promise the same," Andrea responded in a cracked voice. "Oh, Remus, I don't want to meet anyone else." She laid her cheek on his shoulder and yielded to the tears she had been battling.

She felt a dampness on her shoulder and realised that Remus too was weeping. Somehow, that made her feel a thousand times worse. She had never seen him cry, never. A flicker of confusion struck her as she wondered if the Andrea he had known had seen him cry. There was no point thinking about that. She swallowed her own tears and tried to console him. A moment later she realised that he was doing the same thing. Raising her head, she gave him a tearful smile. Then she reached up behind her neck and began to fumble with something.

Andrea took off a thin gold chain she wore and slipped it around Remus' neck.

"I haven't ever taken this off, not since my mother gave it to me," she said as she fastened it around him. It looked strange there, and Remus put up a hand to touch it with wonder. "There," she said. "That's for you."

Remus was still fingering the fine necklace and doing his best to return the smile Andrea gave him.

"Thank you," he murmured. Then he suddenly pulled her to him again, and kissed her.

The door opened halfway, Sirius entered, saw them, apologised with a laugh in his voice and went out again.

Letting go of Remus took more strength and courage than anything Andrea had ever done before. But she released him.

"I think it's time to go," she said.

"Yes," murmured Remus. He walked very slowly to the door, Andrea at his side.

Sirius, James, Lily and Jenny were standing in the sitting room with Pettigrew in the centre, looking at them all with horror and fear. The expression on his face made Andrea's stomach turn flip-flops, but she said nothing. He was the traitor who had betrayed them in one world and tried to betray them here too, the one who had sold his life to Voldemort.

They all looked at each other and suddenly could not find words to say. Silence fell for a long moment.

"Well," James said finally. "Thank you for helping outâ€"and if you ever come back, well, you'll have a place hereâ€"!"

"Thank you," Remus said quietly.

Lily hugged both of them. "Tell Harry â€"tell Harry I love him

still," she said, trying not to cry. "And that we're proud of him."

"He loves you both," Remus said. "I know he does."

Sirius looked at Jenny, who looked at her feet.

"Goodbye, Sirius," she said. She wasn't crying, but her voice shook.

And then there seemed nothing left to say, and everything. Sirius and Remus moved to the prone Pettigrew and began to prepare for the spell. They paused before the final step, looking again at each of their friends.

Andrea suddenly reached into her pocket. "I almost forgot," she said. "I meant to give you this." She pulled out a very large bottle. "You know what that is, Remus love. I tried to put a charm on it so that it would fill itself up again, but it didn't work, so you'll have to go back to asking Snape for it eventually."

"Does it still taste disgusting?" asked Remus, almost smiling.

"No." Andrea put it into Remus' hand and held it for a long time. "Take care of yourself, dearest." He squeezed her hand in return, and then released her. "Goodbye."

Remus and Sirius both raised their wands again to perform the spell.

Suddenly Jenny crossed the room and kissed Sirius.

"Goodbye, my love," she whispered, and then backed away and stood beside Andrea, who took her hand gently.

Then there was a wind, and a light, and the room held only four people. Somehow it seemed colder, now, and darker.

~

Minerva asked no questions when the two stone-faced men forced Pettigrew into Dumbledore's office and in toneless voices explained to her and to Dumbledore how they had managed to catch him. Remus' hand continually went to touch something he was wearing around his neck, and Sirius glared at her as though he wanted to tear her apart.

She did not comment when Sirius expressed a desire to return to his work at once, and threw himself into marking with a vigour she'd never seen him display in the past. Nor did she question Remus' efforts to find out whether Voldemort had actually followed Pettigrew back or not, though his zeal was far beyond what was necessary.

It turned out that Voldemort had returned that very day, though it had been Chrestomanci who had brought the news, speaking to Dumbledore via a specially enchanted Muggle telephone. He also announced that all was now well in his world, and Ginny was doing splendidly. Minerva felt a mixture of anger and pleasure. At least the plan had worked, but the plan had meant that her world was being

terrorised by the Dark Lord again. Wizards were afraid to walk the streets at night, they only trusted those they had known for a long time. Fear and suspicion were rampant. Dumbledore seemed to be pleased with events, though. Why anyone would be pleased to have the Dark Lord back was beyond Minerva.

Pettigrew was in Azkaban, in a special cell with bars like a hamster cage. Sirius had suggested a treadmill as well, and made loud rat jokes in the staff room and to his classes, some of which Minerva disapproved strongly of. But with Sirius' temper so uncertain these days, she did not comment too loudly. She wished Remus would come back, he could normally keep Sirius in line. But the only thing anyone heard of Remus were the reports of Voldemort's supporters being harried and hounded by a man who seemed to know no fear.

Minerva didn't ask Sirius what had happened in the other world, and Sirius certainly didn't volunteer to talk about it. In fact, he even insulted Dumbledore when the headmaster tried to question him about what had gone on. All he would say is that he was here to stay.

~

Remus could not sleep. That was nothing new. He had scarcely had a full night's sleep since Halloween. He did not care about that at all. Whether human or wolf he had been chasing Voldemort and his supporters around the country. As he saw it, Voldemort had torn her away from him not only the first, terrible time, but again a second time.

He turned over on the bed in the hostel he was staying in. It was closed for the winter, officially, but there was nobody there to refuse him entry. He yawned and pulled the blanket over his head. It was very quiet, there was nobody else in the hostel and it was far from Muggle noises and traffic. Quiet enough for him to hear his own heartbeat.

He listened to the sound of blood beating in his ears until he fell asleep, fingering the thin chain around his neck.

Andrea was sitting beside him on a bench in a park. He recognised the place quickly, it was the garden behind the Halls of Healing. She looked tired and lonely, and she leaned her head against him. _

_ _

_"Are you all right?" he asked quietly. _

_ _

_"I'm fine," she answered, her tone belying her words. Remus squeezed her arm. He looked around. This was his world, he could see a gravestone across the garden, a stone he knew all too well, a stone he had spent time keeping clean of moss and brambles. _

_ _

"Are you sure?" he persisted. "You don't sound happy." She gave him an irritated look, sitting up and crossing her arms.

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"I'm just fine. You sound like my mother."

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"Sorry." He spoke quickly. Arguing with Andrea was always painful; he couldn't see how Jenny and Sirius could shout at each other so often and not seem upset by it. But they both had the same kind of flashing, violent temper that vanished as soon as it came. He didn't really know what Andrea's temper would be like. _

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"I just don't like it here," she said at last. "This isn't my home."

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Remus felt as though her words were knives in his heart. _

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"What -- what do you want to do?" he asked slowly. _

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"I don't know!" _

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"Do you want to -- go back?" He shivered a little as he spoke. _

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"How can I?" She sounded at the end of her tether. "The only way for me to come here permanently was to cut all ties with my home. Chrestomanci said as much. There's no way I can get back, I'm stuck here." _

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Remus tried to put an arm around her, but she broke away and stood up. Walking very quickly, she crossed the garden to the tall stone. Remus followed after, his stomach churning. _

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"Look," she said, waving her hand at the gravestone that bore her name. "That's what I am here. Dust, a memory, a stone. I don't belong here, this isn't my home." She glared at Remus. "I can't stand the way people look at me, the things they think behind their backs. They can't decide whether I'm a miracle or an usurper at the Halls, and they ignore me most of the time, and I cannot take it any more!" _

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"We could go away," Remus suggested, "go to Europe or somewhere and start again." Andrea only glared at him. _

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"You don't want to leave here," she retorted. "I know that." _

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"Andrea, if it's what you want, we'll do it. It's not impossible."
Andrea only turned away. _

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"I should never have come," she said bitterly. _

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Remus felt a mixture of remorse and anger come over him. She had agreed to this, she had said she would come here out of love for him, and now she didn't want to be here any more. Pain twisted in him as he wondered if this meant she had fallen out of love. _

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As if she had read his thoughts, she said, sounding less furious, "It's nothing to do with you, Remus. I still love you. But this isn't the place for me." _

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He looked at her as she stood, her eyes full of unhappiness and loneliness, and ached inside for her. But she still had anger in her face despite her words, and he didn't think she wanted his comfort. He knew exactly what she wanted, and it was the only thing in the world he couldn't give her. He ran his fingers over the thin gold band he wore on his left ring finger. _

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"Oh Remus," she said suddenly, "I just want to go home." Remus began to walk over towards her when he tripped over the edge of his cloak and fell. _

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He landed on the floor of the hostel, entangled in blankets, blinking himself awake and shivering, and thinking about the dream. Was that what it would have been like? His shiver had nothing to do with the fact that it was December and the heating appeared to be switched off.

Remus clambered back into bed, rubbing his aching arm. He hadn't fallen out of bed since he was a tiny boy. Would it really have been like that? He couldn't erase the image of Andrea's angry, homesick face from his mind.

Brushing his hair out of his eyes, his fingers caught on the gold chain. Well, he would never know how it would have been. Perhaps it was just as well. At least he knew she would not be homesick, not miss her own world. And he hadn't lost anything, not really. He had gained three precious days with Andrea. A few months ago he would

have given almost anything for three days with Andrea.

He hoped Sirius was coming to the same realisation. He had scarcely seen him since the trial. Perhaps he should go back to Hogwarts in time for the Christmas feast. He looked out at the dark night. He couldn't very well go now, though. In the morning. Thinking that, he fell asleep again, and did not dream.

Despite having had very restless sleep, Remus was awake at dawn. Shivering a little, he dressed and went outside. The sun was rising over the horizon, pale yellow and misty in the winter sky. His teeth were chattering and he pulled his cloak over his head. He mounted his broomstick and lifted into the sky. As the sun rose he flew north to Hogwarts.

THE END

Well, hope you enjoyed the ride, people. And if you're looking for something to read in the few weeks that remain before book 4, you could do a lot worse than reading the Chrestomanci books by Diana Wynne Jones. Titles are 'The Lives of Christopher Chant,' 'Charmed Life,' 'Witch Week' and 'The Magicians of Caprona.'

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_As always, please review. And if you don't like the ending, it's my fault, not Kate's; I talked her in to it. _

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_Blaise & Katie Bell. _

--

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End
file.